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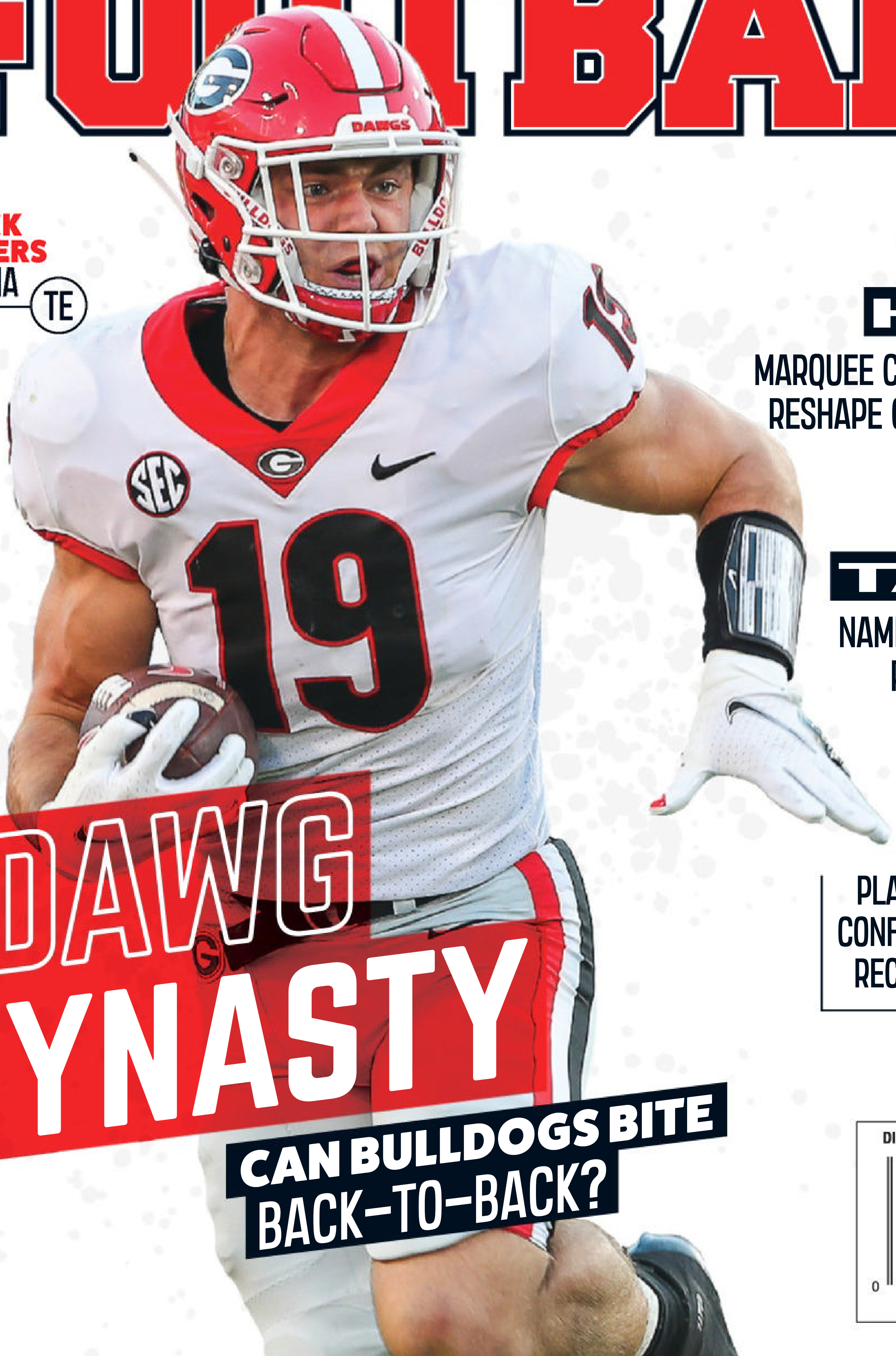

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DAWGS
SEC
BAMA
6
K. JA

SEC Showdown

Last year's national title game was an SEC Championship Game rematch, with Georgia receiver Adonai Mitchell and the Bulldogs getting revenge against Alabama corner Khyree Jackson and the Crimson Tide. Georgia's 33–18 win over Bama earned the Dawgs their first national title since 1980.

Carmen Mandato/Getty Images

ATHLON SPORTS

EDITORIAL

Rob Doster
MANAGING EDITOR
Steven Lassan
COLLEGE FOOTBALL EDITOR
Mark Ross
SENIOR EDITOR
Ben Weinrib
EDITOR
Nathan Rush
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY
Robin Crosslin*
SENIOR DESIGNER
Gorica Zivak*
COVER DESIGN
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ASSISTANT EDITOR
Harrison Clark*
ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Noah Parker*
ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Andrew Schulman*
ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Jacob Schwartz*
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

CORPORATE

Nick Seifert
SVP/GENERAL MANAGER
Newell Thompson*
DIRECTOR OF ADVERTISING & MARKETING
917-881-6949

PRODUCTION

Mark Malone
CIRCULATION DIRECTOR
Sam Payne
PRODUCTION DIRECTOR
Jim Call
PRODUCTION MANAGER
Mike Gregory
PRE-MEDIA MANAGER

ATHLON SPORTS RADIO

Braden Gall*

*Consultants

EDITOR'S NOTE

Around the Athlon Sports offices, the week or so leading up to the May 1 deadline for college football players to enter the transfer portal and the days of dust-settling that followed took on the name "portal-palooza." The frenzy of movement as players chased opportunities (both financial and otherwise) made our heads spin. It was like monitoring the MLB transactions wire in the days following the end of the lockout, an almost futile exercise in cat-herding.

Such is life in 2022, as college football staggers into its new normal, bringing with it a breathtaking assortment of challenges for coaches and opportunities for players. Consequence-free transfers, with name, image and likeness inducements the cherry on the recruiting sundae, have ushered in college football's free-agent era.

Our contributing writers put in hours of overtime keeping us apprised of the movement, and college football editor Steven Lassan slept even less than he normally does in pursuit of 100 percent accuracy. (I think he got pretty close, myself.)

The chaos wasn't limited to rosters, and players weren't the only ones who changed addresses during the most consequential offseason in college football history. The coaching landscape underwent a seismic shift, with six of the sport's flagship programs — USC, Oklahoma, Notre Dame, LSU, Oregon and Miami — now under new management. Lincoln Riley's move from prosperous blueblood Oklahoma to slumbering giant USC was the key domino, but many others fell in its wake.

The hiring frenzy treated us to such spectacles as new LSU head coach Brian Kelly's amusing test-drive of a Cajun accent and a few ill-conceived attempts at TikTok relevance; Mario Cristobal answering the call from Mama to return to his alma mater in true Bear Bryant style; and Riley's swing-for-the-fences approach to his new gig in Troy, where he strained the limits of the portal and the NIL guardrails to execute a rapid revival of the dormant USC football brand.

The steadiest transition of all may have come at the most storied program in the game, as Marcus Freeman got promoted and then got to work crafting a plan to win the big one again at Notre Dame.

College football writer and pundit Steven Godfrey takes us through the ins and outs of these landscape-altering moves in his feature story "Historic Hires" on p. 22 of this year's magazine, assessing the prospects for immediate success at each program in question and tempering expectations where necessary.

The old blessing/curse — "May you live in interesting times" — has never felt more relevant for college football fans. Interesting times indeed.

We hope this magazine helps make this remarkable offseason a little more interesting, and a little more enjoyable.

Rob Doster

Rob Doster, Managing Editor

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Contributing Writers: Eric Adelson, Mark Anderson, Greg Archuleta, Mike Ashley, Bob Asmussen, Mike Babcock, Andy Backstrom, Stephen Bailey, Mike Barber, Colten Bartholomew, Joe Bendel, Andy Bitter, Al Blondin, Bret Bloomquist, Rick Bozich, Brent Briggeman, Kevin Brockway, Jonah Bronstein, Chip Brown, Olin Buchanan, Drew Champlin, Keff Ciardello, David Cloninger, Joel Coleman, Jim Comparoni, Matt Connolly, Jake Curtis, Nick Daschel, Jay Drew, Joseph Duarte, Jeff Faraudo, Bryan Fischer, Parker Fleming, Robert Gagliardi, Steven Godfrey, Andy Greder, Steve Guiremand, Jon Hale, Craig Haley, Zack Hall, Greg Hansen, Shawn Harrison, Pat Harty, Nolan Hayes, John Helsley, Brandon Helwig, Matt Herb, Jerry Hill, Kelly Hines, Matt Hinton, Brian Howell, Joey Johnston, Chris Karpman, Michael Katz, Kirk Kenney, Mike Kern, Chuck King, James Kratch, Theo Lawson, Tom Layberger, Chris Level, Ferd Lewis, Kelly Lyle, Sean Manning, Matt Markey, Jared McDonald, Aaron McMann, Carlos Mendez, Shane Mettlen, Allen Moff, Rob Moseley, Tom Murphy, Bob Narang, Jesse Newell, Josh Newman, Bill Nichols, Tim Prister, Scott Rabalais, Dan Raley, Jeff Rapp, Adam Rittenberg, Kellis Robinett, Jake Rowe, Nathan Schneider, Ira Schoffel, Matt Schonvisky, Stephen Schramm, David Simone, Guerry Smith, Damien Sordelett, Dave Southorn, Adam Sparks, Phil Stukenborg, John Talty, Edgar Thompson, Grant Traylor, Bill Trocchi, Kevin Turbeville, Matt Vautour, Bill Wagner, Marek Warszawski, Robbie Weinstein, Chris Williams, David Wilson, Michael Wilson, Steve Wiseman, Dan Wolken, Jacey Zembal

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ATHLON SPORTS

2022 COLLEGE FOOTBALL

TOP 25

NICK SABAN

1 ALABAMA

After last year's "disaster," when the Tide failed to win the national title and also fell to an SEC rival in the national title game, there can be only one path for Bama, and that's to the top again. QB Bryce Young, the 2021 Heisman winner, is the perfect person to lead the Redemption Tour, and it's no secret that head coach Nick Saban and his staff have been pretty darn successful on the recruiting trail for the past decade, so there will be plenty of talent available to re-stock key areas. And the Tide aren't afraid to use the portal, either. Georgia Tech dynamo Jahmyr Gibbs should be a standout. Former Georgia wideout Jermaine Burton has plenty of talent, and LSU expatriate Eli Ricks was an all-America corner in 2020. Don't forget that hurricane-force linebacker Will Anderson Jr. will be residing in enemy backfields again, and he'll have plenty of help on that side of the ball. Second just isn't good enough in Tuscaloosa, and Saban is ready to fix that in 2022.

2 OHIO STATE

Anybody who watched the Buckeye offense in OSU's Rose Bowl win over Oregon knows what lies ahead for rivals in 2022. Quarterback C.J. Stroud could throw for 10,000 yards, and the receiving tandem of Jaxon Smith-Njigba and Marvin Harrison Jr. has the potential to be one of the best in college football history. The trouble comes on defense, where new coordinator Jim Knowles must tighten up a unit that was too generous last year. Then again, if the Bucks are scoring 65 a game, it might not matter.

3 GEORGIA

Now we learn if the Dawgs can follow a national title and loss of some key talent with a Bama-style re-load. Brock Bowers is back to pile up the catches and TDs at tight end, but new co-coordinators Will Muschamp and Glenn Schumann must hope some of those blue-chippers that have been heading to Athens over the past couple seasons are ready to perform at a high level on D.

UGA X

4 CLEMSON

It's a pretty good sign of a program's health when a 10-3 season is considered a disappointment. QB DJ Uiagalelei was unimpressive last year, and now he has to deal with a new coordinator (Brandon Streeter), but six other starters return on offense. The defense loses super-coordinator Brent Venables but returns several All-America candidates, including DL Bryan Bresee and LBs Myles Murphy and Trenton Simpson, to what could be a historically great unit.

5 TEXAS A&M

Ever since the Aggies decided to commit the equivalent of a medium-sized nation's GDP to Jimbo Fisher, fans have been waiting for a payoff. This could be the year. The big question is on defense, where the Aggies have a new coordinator (D.J. Durkin) and plenty of holes. RB Devon Achane and wideout Ainias Smith are playmakers.

6 MICHIGAN

There was much rejoicing in the Wolverine Kingdom last season after U-M FINALLY defeated Ohio State and won its first outright Big Ten title since 2003. There was more celebration when head coach Jim Harbaugh calmed his wandering eye (for now) and announced he was coming back. The encore will be fueled by an offense with plenty of star power, including running backs Blake Corum and Donovan Edwards, an incumbent at QB (Cade McNamara, with J.J. McCarthy looming) and a talented O-line.

7 NOTRE DAME

Forget about the Irish collapse in the Fiesta Bowl at the end of last season. That's not an accurate representation of what Marcus Freeman is about. ND's new head coach will bring some new energy to recruiting and has the support of the players. The future is bright. How well Freeman translates that into success his first year is a different story. The defense should be ferocious, especially up front, where Jayson and Justin Ademilola and Isaiah Foskey return.

JUSTIN & JAYSON ADEMILOLA

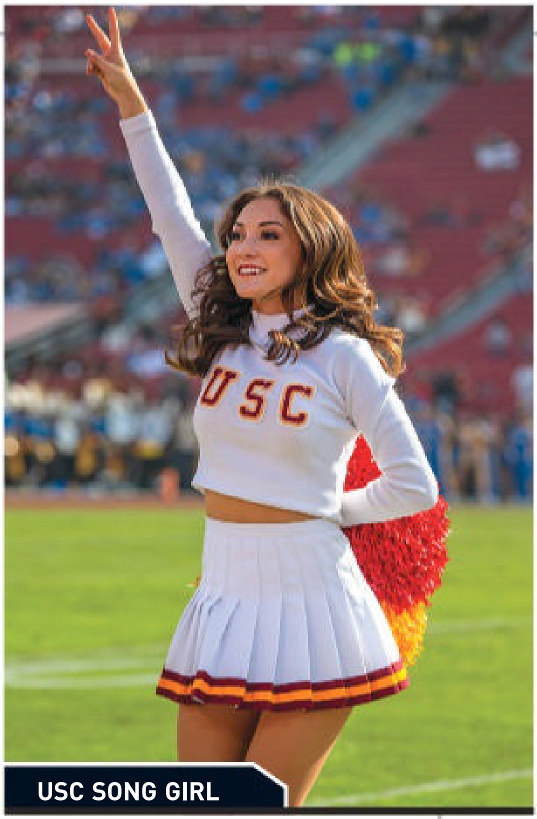
8 UTAH

People no longer wonder whether the Utes can hang in the Pac-12. They did more than that last year, winning the championship trophy and hanging with Ohio State's sprinters in the Rose Bowl. The offense is stacked, and the return of quarterback Cameron Rising is particularly important. But he'll have plenty of help, especially running backs Tavion Thomas and Micah Bernard.

Uga X: Tom DiPace

9 USC

The most exciting spin of the coaching carousel came when Lincoln Riley headed to Troy for a compensation package that we think includes Disneyland and the Hollywood sign. Things got even wilder when former Oklahoma quarterback Caleb Williams joined his former coach at SC. The Trojans will be fun to watch again, and they'll also make a return to the top 10.



USC SONG GIRL

10 OREGON

Cry not for the Ducks, who replaced Mario Cristobal with former Georgia DC Dan Lanning and then convinced former Auburn QB Bo Nix to play in Niketown. There is depth along the offensive line and a collection of proven wideouts, led by Kris Hutson. The defense has holes to fill, especially in the defensive backfield, but linebacker Noah Sewell is a big-time tackler.

11 BAYLOR

Anyone wondering whether the Bears had made the right decision by hiring Dave Aranda as head coach got their answer last season, when he was named national Coach of the Year after leading the Bears to a school-record 12 wins, a conference title and the school's first New Year's bowl triumph in 64 years. Now comes the tough part: repeating. Don't worry about the defense. Even though it loses some talent, Siaki Ika is back to set the tone up front, and Aranda is all about the D.

12 NC STATE

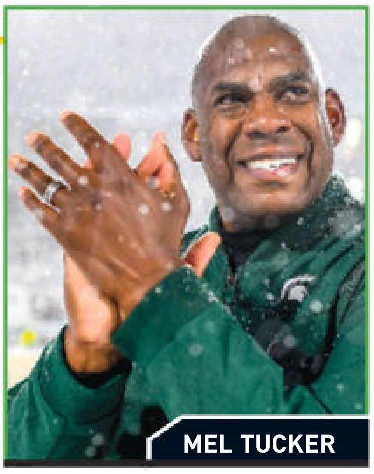
While a lot of the Tobacco Road football attention was focused on the school in Chapel Hill, Dave Doeren was quietly building a winner at NC State. The Wolfpack return quarterback Devin Leary, who threw for 35 TDs last year, and four starting linemen. More impressive is the return of just about the entire second-ranked defense in the ACC.

13 OKLAHOMA

If Netflix decided to green-light a series about the Sooners' offseason, it would have gained plenty of views — outside of Norman, of course. For OU fans, Lincoln Riley's departure, Caleb Williams' jump to the portal and 13 other players' decisions to head for the NFL or into the transfer world have been the cause of extreme anxiety and hand-wringing. It's up to alum Brent Venables to settle things down as OU looks ahead to its jump to the SEC.

14 MICHIGAN STATE

Mr. Portal is at it again in East Lansing, as Spartans head coach Mel Tucker welcomes nearly 10 transfers, most notably Wisconsin running back Jalen Berger. Payton Thorne impressed last year at QB and will love throwing again to Jayden Reed. Last year's 8-0 start was great, but Michigan State wants to be strong at the end of the year, too.



MEL TUCKER

15 CINCINNATI

The champagne hangover has just about abated in the Queen City, but there is reason to believe the Bearcats might be able to stage another big celebration, even though plenty of talent has left UC. Head coach Luke Fickell is back, and that's a big step forward. Now, we'll find out if he has been building something that can last or a one-time phenomenon.

16 WAKE FOREST

Look for another year of crazy games involving the Deacons, thanks to plenty of returnees in head coach Dave Clawson's attack — most notably quarterback Sam Hartman, a complete wizard with the ball — and a defense that might be a little better than last year's 92nd-ranked outfit but not a whole lot.

17 OKLAHOMA STATE

After tightening things up on defense the last couple years, courtesy of all-star coordinator Jim Knowles, the Cowpokes could go back to simply outscoring everybody in 2022. Knowles is gone, and plenty returns on offense, most notably quarterback Spencer Sanders, who will be a starter for the fourth straight year.

18 TENNESSEE

They're going to score some points on Rocky Top, because that's what Josh Heupel's offenses do, and the returns of quarterback Hendon Hooker and explosive wideout Cedric Tillman should assure that. But if the Vols want to make strides in the SEC East, where Georgia has jetted way past everybody else, they must improve a defense that gave up a drop short of 30 a game last year.

19 WISCONSIN

It's hardly news that the Badgers will run a lot this season. They do that every season. The interesting thing could be watching Braelon Allen and Chez Mellusi trying to outdo each other when they get the ball. The defense was the nation's best last year, but eight starters are gone.

WISCONSIN BUCKY WAGON

20 MIAMI

Mario Cristobal has come back to his alma mater, and Canes fans hope the combination of his intimate knowledge of the "U" and his time spent learning the Nick Saban Process will bring a return to the dynasty days. QB Tyler Van Dyke is a great starting point, and running back Jaylan Knighton has big-time potential. The Hurricanes must hope USC transfer Jacob Lichtenstein can trigger another great pass rush that keyed the Miami defense last year.

Saban: Crimson Tide Photos/UA Athletics; Ademilola: David Madison/Getty Images; USC: Peter Brouillet; Tucker: Nic Antaya/Getty Images; Bucky: Joe Robbins

21 KENTUCKY

The tandem of QB Will Levis and running back Chris Rodriguez Jr. returns, but Kentucky must beef up its offensive line and develop some outside targets. The defense was strong against the run last year but must find some new starters up front, and needed improvement in the secondary will depend on three new starters. Credit Mark Stoops for building a program capable of sustained success.

PITT BAND

Bruce L. Schwartzman

22 PITTSBURGH

The Panthers extended head coach Pat Narduzzi's contract through the end of the century — or something like that — and for good reason. Pitt is on the rise, and it has USC transfer Kedon Slovis to take over under center for Kenny Pickett. He'll love throwing to wideout Jordan Addison (if Addison stays in the Steel City) and working behind an experienced O-line. Expect the defense (Narduzzi's specialty) to be nasty again.

23 ARKANSAS

Nobody outside of The Natural State knew who Sam Pittman was when he took over as head coach in 2020. But after last year's 9-4 record that included wins over Texas A&M and Texas and a near-miss with Alabama, people have learned. Quarterback KJ Jefferson was a dangerous dual-threat last year, and he'll enjoy throwing to Oklahoma transfer Jadon Haselwood.

24 HOUSTON

Last year was a big one for the Cougars. Not only did UH get the call to join the Big 12, returning it in a way to its Southwest Conference roots, but it also turned in a 12-2 performance on the field. It's not unreasonable to think Houston will be at least as good, if not better, in '22. Of course, that's assuming a solid defense from last year can still stop some people despite a bunch of key losses. The offense will be fine. Check that. The offense will be blazing.

25 PENN STATE

The Nittany Lions crowed — rightly — about their 2022 recruiting class, and the additions of QB Drew Allar and RB Nicholas Singleton are reasons for excitement. But the '22 season is going to depend on some holdovers to get things right, most notably sixth-year signal-caller Sean Clifford, who has been inconsistent during his time in Happy Valley.

RANKING the REST

26 LSU
27 BYU
28 Ole Miss
29 Texas
30 Mississippi State
31 Purdue
32 Iowa
33 Florida
34 Boise State
35 Fresno State
36 Florida State
37 Air Force
38 Minnesota
39 UCLA
40 Auburn
41 Kansas State
42 South Carolina
43 Boston College
44 Louisville
45 UCF
46 Oregon State
47 North Carolina
48 Appalachian State
49 Coastal Carolina
50 Iowa State
51 West Virginia
52 Washington
53 Missouri
54 Nebraska
55 TCU
56 Utah State
57 Syracuse
58 Maryland
59 San Diego State
60 Washington State
61 Texas Tech
62 California
63 SMU
64 UAB
65 UTSA
66 Virginia Tech
67 Illinois
68 Virginia
69 Stanford
70 Army
71 East Carolina
72 Georgia State
73 Liberty
74 Memphis
75 Marshall
76 Northern Illinois
77 Arizona
78 Toledo
79 Louisiana
80 Arizona State
81 Rutgers
82 Indiana
83 Northwestern
84 Tulane
85 Miami (Ohio)
86 Colorado State
87 WKU
88 Georgia Tech
89 Kent State
90 Tulsa
91 Central Michigan
92 Colorado
93 South Alabama
94 Vanderbilt
95 Wyoming
96 Troy
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98 James Madison
99 Kansas
100 USF
101 San Jose State
102 Navy
103 Southern Miss
104 UTEP
105 Florida Atlantic
106 Western Michigan
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108 Charlotte
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110 Duke
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112 UNLV
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114 Nevada
115 Bowling Green
116 Louisiana Tech
117 Texas State
118 Arkansas State
119 Ball State
120 Ohio
121 Buffalo
122 Temple
123 Rice
124 New Mexico
125 Akron
126 ULM
127 Hawaii
128 FIU
129 Connecticut
130 New Mexico State
131 UMass

2022 BOWL PROJECTIONS

Alamo
Big 12 vs. Pac-12
Oklahoma State vs. Oregon

Arizona
MAC vs. Mountain West
Toledo vs. Fresno State

Armed Forces
Big 12/C-USA/AAC
Houston vs. Iowa State

Bahamas
C-USA vs. MAC
Florida Atlantic vs. Western Michigan

Birmingham
At-Large/AAC/ACC/C-USA vs. SEC
Maryland vs. Mississippi State

Boca Raton
AAC/C-USA/MAC/Sun Belt
Coastal Carolina vs. UCF

Camellia
MAC/C-USA vs. Sun Belt
Miami (Ohio) vs. South Alabama

Cheez-It
ACC/Notre Dame vs. Big 12
Miami (Fla.) vs. Oklahoma

Citrus
Big Ten vs. SEC
Wisconsin vs. Tennessee

Cure
AAC/C-USA/MAC/MW/Sun Belt
WKU vs. Liberty

Duke's Mayo
Big Ten vs. SEC
Penn State vs. Florida State

Famous Idaho Potato
MAC vs. Mountain West
Air Force vs. Northern Illinois

Fenway
ACC vs. American
Syracuse vs. SMU

First Responder
AAC/Big 12/C-USA/Sun Belt/MW
TCU vs. California

Frisco
AAC/C-USA/MAC/MW/Sun Belt
North Texas vs. Colorado State

Frisco Football Classic
Group of 5 vs. Group of 5
UTEP vs. Louisiana

Gasparilla
AAC/ACC/SEC/Pac-12
Auburn vs. Louisville

Gator
ACC vs. SEC
Pittsburgh vs. Florida

Guaranteed Rate
Big 12 vs. Big Ten
Kansas State vs. Nebraska

Hawaii
AAC/C-USA/BYU vs. Mountain West
BYU vs. San Diego State

Holiday
ACC vs. Pac-12
Wake Forest vs. UCLA

Independence
AAC vs. Army
Tulane vs. Army

LA Bowl
Mountain West vs. Pac-12
Boise State vs. Washington State

Las Vegas
Pac-12 vs. SEC
Washington vs. LSU

LendingTree
MAC/C-USA vs. Sun Belt
Kent State vs. Marshall

Liberty
Big 12 vs. SEC
West Virginia vs. South Carolina

Military
ACC vs. American
Virginia Tech vs. East Carolina

Music City
Big Ten vs. SEC
Iowa vs. Arkansas

Myrtle Beach
AAC/MAC/C-USA/Sun Belt
Georgia State vs. Memphis

New Mexico
AAC/C-USA/MAC vs. Mountain West
Utah State vs. UTSA

New Orleans
Conference USA vs. Sun Belt
UAB vs. Appalachian State

Pinstripe
ACC vs. Big Ten
North Carolina vs. Purdue

Quick Lane
Big Ten vs. MAC
Minnesota vs. Central Michigan

Sun
ACC vs. Pac-12
Boston College vs. Oregon State

Tampa Bay
Big Ten vs. SEC
Michigan State vs. Kentucky

Texas
Big 12 vs. SEC
Texas vs. Ole Miss

NEW YEAR'S SIX

Orange
ACC vs. Big Ten/Notre Dame/SEC
NC State vs. Notre Dame

Sugar
SEC vs. Big 12
Texas A&M vs. Baylor

Cotton
At-large vs. At-large
Cincinnati vs. USC

Rose
Big Ten vs. Pac-12
Michigan vs. Utah

JORDAN BATTLE

Tom DiPace

COLLEGE FOOTBALL PLAYOFF

National Semifinal
Fiesta Bowl
Saturday, Dec. 31, 2022
Alabama vs. Clemson

National Semifinal
Peach Bowl
Saturday, Dec. 31, 2022
Ohio State vs. Georgia

National Championship
Jan. 9, 2023
Alabama vs. Ohio State
National Champion: Alabama

ATHLON SPORTS

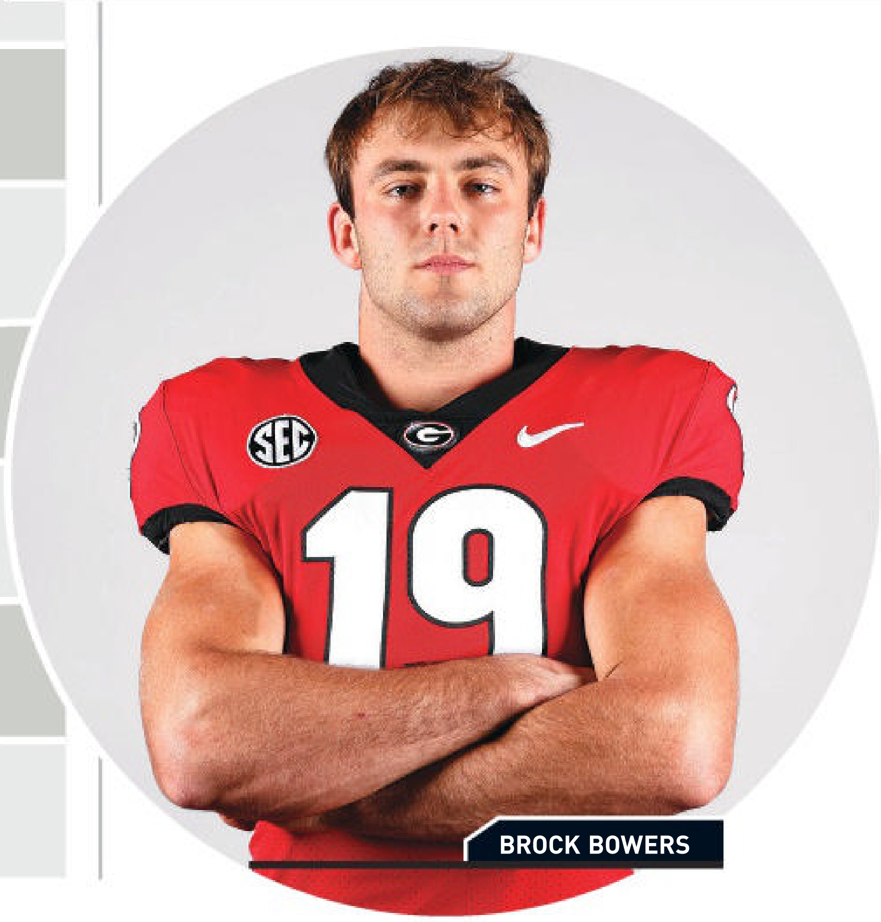
All-America TEAM

BRYCE YOUNG

FIRST-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	Bryce Young	Jr.	Alabama
RB	Bijan Robinson	Jr.	Texas
RB	Sean Tucker	So.	Syracuse
AP	Deuce Vaughn	Jr.	Kansas State
WR	Jaxon Smith-Njigba	Jr.	Ohio State
WR	Jordan Addison	Jr.	Pittsburgh
TE	Brock Bowers	So.	Georgia
C	John Michael Schmitz	Sr.	Minnesota
OL	Peter Skoronski	Jr.	Northwestern
OL	Connor Galvin	Sr.	Baylor
OL	Dawand Jones	Sr.	Ohio State
OL	Andrew Vorhees	Sr.	USC

DEUCE VAUGHN


BROCK BOWERS

FIRST-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	Jalen Carter	Jr.	Georgia
DL	Calijah Kancey	Jr.	Pittsburgh
DL	Will McDonald IV	Sr.	Iowa State
DL	Bryan Bresee	So.	Clemson
LB	Will Anderson Jr.	Jr.	Alabama
LB	Noah Sewell	So.	Oregon
LB	Jack Campbell	Sr.	Iowa
CB	Riley Moss	Sr.	Iowa
CB	Kelee Ringo	So.	Georgia
S	Jordan Battle	Sr.	Alabama
S	Antonio Johnson	Jr.	Texas A&M

FIRST-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	Harrison Mevis	Jr.	Missouri
P	Adam Korsak	Sr.	Rutgers
KR	Brian Battie	So.	USF
PR	Ainias Smith	Sr.	Texas A&M

WILL MCDONALD IV

NOAH SEWELL

JACK CAMPBELL

Kent Gidley/Crimson Tide Photos/UA Athletics; K-State Athletics; Georgia Athletics; Iowa State Athletics; Eric Evans/Oregon Athletics; Stephen Mally/hawkeyesports.com

C.J. STROUD

JOSH DOWNS

MICHAEL MAYER

SECOND-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	C.J. Stroud	So.	Ohio State
RB	Braelon Allen	So.	Wisconsin
RB	TreVeyon Henderson	So.	Ohio State
AP	Jahmyr Gibbs	Jr.	Alabama
WR	Xavier Worthy	So.	Texas
WR	Josh Downs	Jr.	North Carolina
TE	Michael Mayer	Jr.	Notre Dame
C	Jarrett Patterson	Sr.	Notre Dame
OL	Paris Johnson Jr.	Jr.	Ohio State
OL	Caleb Chandler	Sr.	Louisville
OL	Jordan McFadden	Sr.	Clemson
OL	Nick Broeker	Sr.	Ole Miss

SECOND-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	Isaiah Foskey	Jr.	Notre Dame
DL	Zach Harrison	Sr.	Ohio State
DL	Felix Anudike-Uzomah	Jr.	Kansas State
DL	Myles Murphy	Jr.	Clemson
LB	Nolan Smith	Sr.	Georgia
LB	Payton Wilson	Jr.	NC State
LB	Trenton Simpson	Jr.	Clemson
CB	Clark Phillips III	So.	Utah
CB	Cam Smith	Jr.	South Carolina
S	Brandon Joseph	Jr.	Notre Dame
S	Jalen Catalon	Jr.	Arkansas

SECOND-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	Jake Moody	Sr.	Michigan
P	Tory Taylor	Jr.	Iowa
KR	Malik Knowles	Sr.	Kansas State
PR	Jayden Reed	Sr.	Michigan State

Eric Wagner/Ohio State Athletics; Jeffrey A. Camarati/UNC Athletics; Notre Dame Athletics

THIRD-TEAM OFFENSE

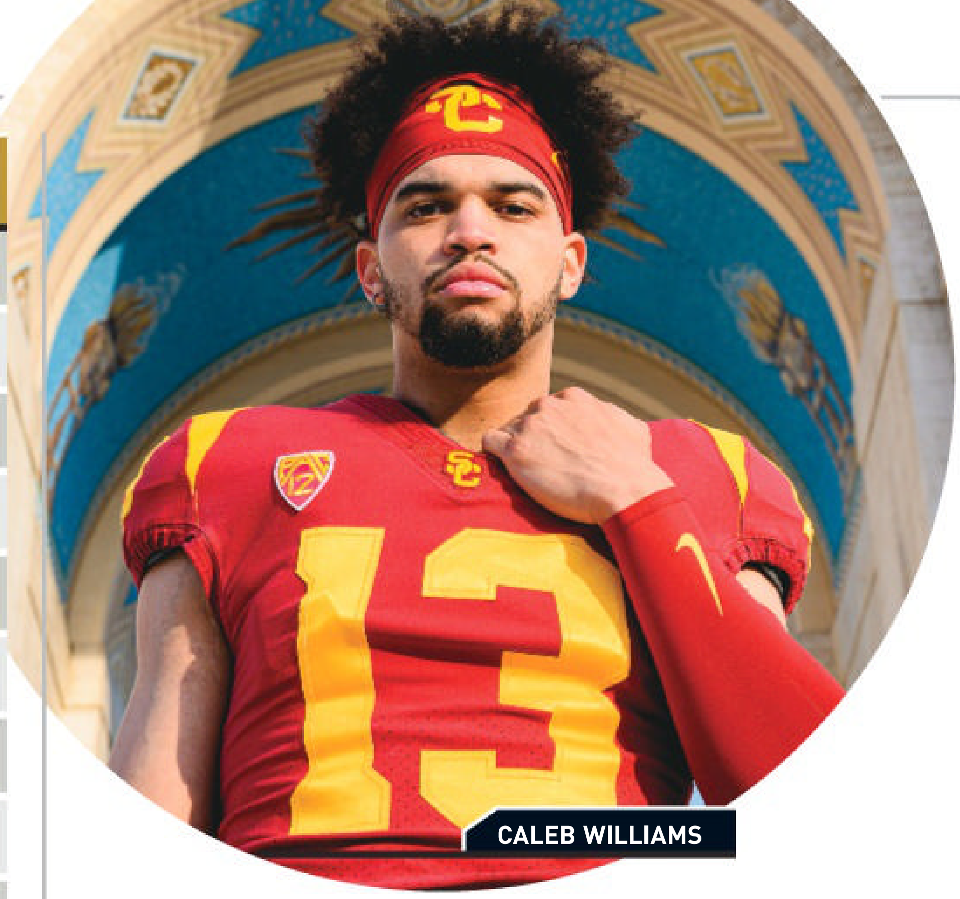
QB	Caleb Williams	So.	USC
RB	Zach Charbonnet	Jr.	UCLA
RB	Tavion Thomas	Jr.	Utah
AP	Travis Dye	Sr.	USC
WR	A.T. Perry	Jr.	Wake Forest
WR	Kayshon Boutte	Jr.	LSU
TE	Brant Kuithe	Sr.	Utah
C	Olusegun Oluwatimi	Sr.	Michigan
OL	Christian Mahogany	Jr.	Boston College
OL	Braeden Daniels	Jr.	Utah
OL	Layden Robinson	Jr.	Texas A&M
OL	Jaxson Kirkland	Sr.	Washington

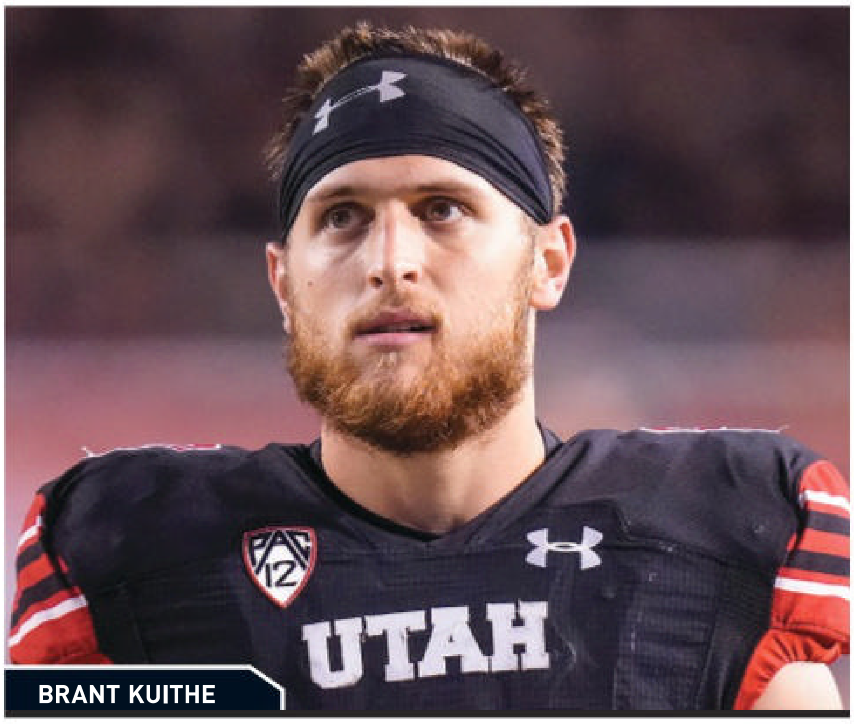
THIRD-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	Derick Hall	Sr.	Auburn
DL	Tyler Davis	Sr.	Clemson
DL	Dante Stills	Sr.	West Virginia
DL	Collin Oliver	So.	Oklahoma State
LB	Carlton Martial	Sr.	Troy
LB	Andre Carter II	Jr.	Army
LB	Drake Thomas	Jr.	NC State
CB	Eli Ricks	Jr.	Alabama
CB	Denzel Burke	So.	Ohio State
S	Andrew Mukuba	So.	Clemson
S	Ji'Ayir Brown	Sr.	Penn State

THIRD-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	Jonah Dalmas	Jr.	Boise State
P	Nik Constantinou	Jr.	Texas A&M
KR	Bryan Massey	Jr.	SMU
PR	Jaylin Lane	So.	Middle Tennessee


CALEB WILLIAMS


BRANT KUITHE

DANTE STILLS

USC Athletics; Kuithe: AP Photo/Rick Bowmer; West Virginia Athletics

ATHLON SPORTS

THE 22nd ANNUAL UNIT RANKINGS

MALIK VANN

AAC

	QB	RB	WR	OL	DL	LB	DB
Cincinnati	6	2	2	1	1	1	1
East Carolina	4	1	6	7	6	5	5
Houston	1	9	1	5	2	2	3
Memphis	5	8	7	6	7	6	4
Navy	10	11	11	11	9	10	11
SMU	2	6	5	3	5	7	6
Temple	11	10	10	10	11	11	8
Tulane	3	4	9	9	4	3	9
Tulsa	7	5	4	8	8	8	7
UCF	8	3	3	2	3	9	2
USF	9	7	8	4	10	4	10

BRYAN BRESEE

ACC

	QB	RB	WR	OL	DL	LB	DB
Boston College	7	4	7	11	9	9	7
Clemson	9	2	8	6	1	2	1
Duke	14	14	14	12	13	14	14
Florida State	6	6	9	7	4	6	3
Georgia Tech	12	8	11	13	12	11	13
Louisville	5	7	10	3	8	5	6
Miami (Fla.)	4	3	6	4	5	12	4
North Carolina	10	10	5	10	7	8	10
NC State	2	12	4	5	3	1	2
Pittsburgh	8	5	1	1	2	4	5
Syracuse	11	1	13	9	11	3	9
Virginia	3	13	3	14	14	10	12
Virginia Tech	13	11	12	8	10	7	11
Wake Forest	1	9	2	2	6	13	8

BIG 12

	QB	RB	WR	OL	DL	LB	DB
Baylor	6	7	9	1	2	1	1
Iowa State	9	10	3	4	6	4	5
Kansas	10	6	10	10	10	10	10
Kansas State	5	2	8	6	4	3	6
Oklahoma	2	3	2	2	3	2	2
Oklahoma State	1	8	5	5	1	8	4
TCU	7	4	4	8	9	6	7
Texas	4	1	1	7	7	5	3
Texas Tech	8	5	7	9	8	9	8
West Virginia	3	9	6	3	5	7	9

Vann: Michael Allio/Icon Sportswire via Getty Images; Bresee: Al Kooistra

BIG TEN

	QB	RB	WR	OL	DL	LB	DB
Illinois	12	6	12	12	10	9	11
Indiana	11	14	13	14	12	14	12
Iowa	10	9	7	9	3	1	1
Maryland	4	11	3	5	13	12	13
Michigan	2	3	2	2	2	4	4
Michigan State	5	7	5	4	6	7	8
Minnesota	8	4	8	8	9	8	5
Nebraska	7	10	9	11	8	3	9
Northwestern	13	8	14	6	14	11	10
Ohio State	1	1	1	1	1	2	2
Penn State	6	5	4	10	4	5	3
Purdue	3	12	6	7	7	10	7
Rutgers	14	13	10	13	11	13	14
Wisconsin	9	2	11	3	5	6	6

JAMAL HINES

CONFERENCE USA

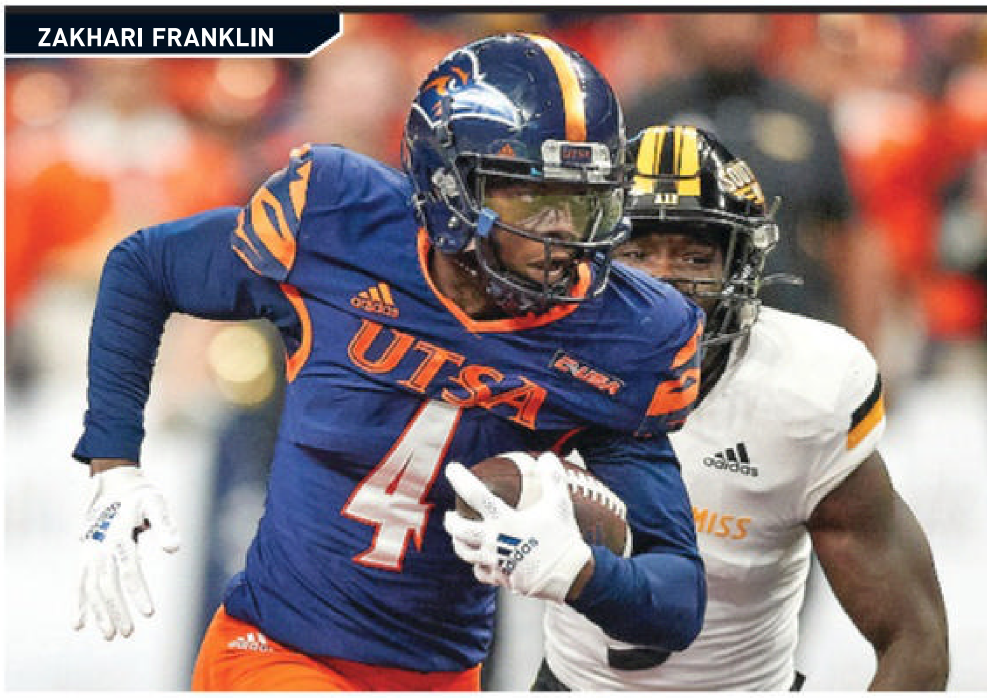
	QB	RB	WR	OL	DL	LB	DB
Charlotte	2	4	2	4	9	10	9
Florida Atlantic	4	7	9	7	5	6	4
FIU	9	8	4	11	11	11	11
Louisiana Tech	11	10	6	9	8	8	8
Middle Tennessee	7	11	5	10	3	7	7
North Texas	8	2	7	3	10	3	5
Rice	10	6	11	8	7	9	10
UAB	3	1	8	2	4	1	1
UTEP	5	3	10	6	1	4	6
UTSA	1	5	1	1	2	2	2
WKU	6	9	3	5	6	5	3

Toledo Athletics; UTSA: Jeff Huehn; Henderson: Joe Robbins

TREVEYON HENDERSON

MID-AMERICAN

	QB	RB	WR	OL	DL	LB	DB
Akron	8	10	11	12	12	9	12
Ball State	12	7	7	5	9	7	10
Bowling Green	6	9	9	10	3	3	2
Buffalo	10	6	10	11	5	8	11
Central Michigan	5	1	8	8	2	11	9
Eastern Michigan	9	12	1	9	11	12	5
Kent State	4	3	2	6	10	10	6
Miami (Ohio)	1	8	4	3	8	4	7
Northern Illinois	2	2	3	1	6	5	3
Ohio	7	11	12	7	7	6	4
Toledo	3	5	6	2	1	1	1
Western Michigan	11	4	5	4	4	2	8



ZAKHARI FRANKLIN

HENRY TO'OTO'O

MOUNTAIN WEST

	QB	RB	WR	OL	DL	LB	DB
Air Force	4	1	7	1	4	3	8
Boise State	3	6	4	2	2	7	1
Colorado State	7	8	2	8	10	5	9
Fresno State	1	3	1	5	5	2	3
Hawaii	11	10	10	9	12	10	12
Nevada	9	5	9	12	8	12	10
New Mexico	12	11	11	11	9	8	6
San Diego State	6	7	6	4	1	1	2
San Jose State	5	9	3	7	3	4	4
UNLV	8	12	8	10	11	11	11
Utah State	2	4	5	3	6	9	5
Wyoming	10	2	12	6	7	6	7

PAC-12

	QB	RB	WR	OL	DL	LB	DB
Arizona	7	10	9	11	10	12	10
Arizona State	10	5	12	10	7	7	11
California	11	9	11	8	5	4	3
Colorado	12	8	10	12	11	9	12
Oregon	5	4	3	1	2	1	2
Oregon State	8	6	7	2	6	5	5
Stanford	6	11	2	7	12	10	8
UCLA	3	3	8	6	8	8	9
USC	1	2	1	4	3	6	4
Utah	2	1	4	3	1	2	1
Washington	9	7	6	5	9	3	6
Washington State	4	12	5	9	4	11	7

SEC

	QB	RB	WR	OL	DL	LB	DB
Alabama	1	1	2	3	1	1	1
Arkansas	3	6	12	6	8	7	7
Auburn	12	4	13	9	5	8	4
Florida	8	11	9	8	10	5	5
Georgia	6	2	1	1	2	2	2
Kentucky	7	3	10	4	11	3	11
LSU	11	9	3	12	4	4	10
Missouri	13	14	11	7	13	13	13
Miss. State	4	8	6	10	6	6	12
Ole Miss	9	7	8	5	7	12	6
South Carolina	5	12	7	13	12	11	8
Tennessee	2	10	4	11	9	10	9
Texas A&M	10	5	5	2	3	9	3
Vanderbilt	14	13	14	14	14	14	14

JL SKINNER

SUN BELT

	QB	RB	WR	OL	DL	LB	DB
Appalachian State	2	1	11	1	3	2	1
Arkansas State	8	13	8	14	13	12	13
Coastal Carolina	1	3	12	3	2	13	8
Georgia Southern	14	6	13	7	9	11	9
Georgia State	3	5	7	2	7	4	6
James Madison	9	9	10	10	8	8	11
Louisiana	13	8	4	8	4	7	5
Marshall	5	2	1	9	6	3	2
Old Dominion	6	4	2	4	10	9	10
South Alabama	7	12	3	11	5	5	3
Southern Miss	11	7	9	12	11	6	7
Texas State	4	10	6	6	12	10	12
Troy	10	11	5	5	1	1	4
ULM	12	14	14	13	14	14	14

To'oTo'o: Tom DiPace; Skinner: Peter Brouillet

NATIONAL UNIT RANKINGS

Quarterbacks

1 Alabama
2 Ohio State
3 USC
4 Michigan
5 Coastal Carolina
6 Wake Forest
7 NC State
8 Tennessee
9 Fresno State
10 Virginia

Running Backs

1 Texas
2 Ohio State
3 Alabama
4 Georgia
5 Wisconsin
6 Utah
7 Kentucky
8 Auburn
9 Michigan
10 Texas A&M

Wide Receivers

1 Ohio State
2 Georgia
3 Alabama
4 USC
5 Texas
6 Pittsburgh
7 Wake Forest
8 Virginia
9 Michigan
10 LSU

Offensive Line

1 Ohio State
2 Georgia
3 Michigan
4 Baylor
5 Texas A&M
6 Oregon
7 Wisconsin
8 Notre Dame
9 BYU
10 Alabama

Defensive Line

1 Clemson
2 Alabama
3 Georgia
4 Pittsburgh
5 Oklahoma State
6 Baylor
7 Notre Dame
8 Ohio State
9 Texas A&M
10 LSU

Linebackers

1 Alabama
2 Georgia
3 NC State
4 Iowa
5 Oregon
6 Clemson
7 Kentucky
8 Ohio State
9 LSU
10 Notre Dame

Defensive Backs

1 Alabama
2 Georgia
3 Texas A&M
4 Iowa
5 Ohio State
6 Clemson
7 Penn State
8 NC State
9 Boise State
10 Utah

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15 THINGS TO WATCH in 2022

BY MATT HINTON

KIRBY SMART

1 Georgia: Rebuild or Repeat?

Well, they did it. Georgia fans had been waiting four decades to reset the "Years Since Georgia Won a National Championship" clock to zero, and the 2021 team delivered in the most satisfying possible fashion by vanquishing Alabama in the championship game. As of Jan. 11, they'll never have to listen to another recounting of their record against Nick Saban's Tide or the words "since 1980..." ever again. The investment in Kirby Smart's vision has paid off in full. So: What next?

In a different era, the Dawgs might have been resigned to rebuilding. These days, though, the concentration of talent at the top has largely rendered the concept of "rebuilding" at places like Georgia obsolete. By stacking top-ranked recruiting classes, Smart has built a roster composed mainly of two types of players: Those who are already stars, like TE Brock Bowers, DL Jalen Carter and OLB Nolan Smith, and those who project to be as soon as they get the chance.

Barring disaster, the major obstacle to returning to the playoff is a familiar one: Alabama in the SEC Championship Game. Last year, the Bulldogs were so far ahead of the pack after 12 games that even a lopsided loss in Atlanta wasn't enough to knock them out of the national race, or prevent them from reversing the outcome with the big prize on the line a few weeks later. By the time the postseason rolls around this year, they don't plan on needing a second chance.

2 Bryce Young Goes for Two

Bryce Young was who he was supposed to be in 2021, claiming the Heisman Trophy and leading Bama to the cusp of another national championship in his first year as a starter. He was the most consistent quarterback in college football, throwing multiple touchdown passes in every game except the championship loss to Georgia, and arguably the most dynamic. He would have been the first QB off the board had he been eligible for this year's draft, and he enters (presumably) his last year on campus as a heavy favorite to go out as the top pick in 2023.

Going back-to-back in the Heisman race might be a longer shot. Famously, only one winner, Ohio State RB Archie Griffin in 1974-75, has claimed the trophy two years in a row, a feat that might be impossible to replicate unless Young demolishes his sophomore production so thoroughly that he leaves voters no choice but to grant him the distinction. Leading the Crimson Tide back to the playoff is probably a bare minimum requirement. Young has already cemented his legacy as a great college player. Is he a historic player? That's the bar he'll be measured against this time around.

3 Michigan: Sustaining or Sobering Up?

After six years of diminishing returns, the consensus last summer was that the Jim Harbaugh project at Michigan had run out of gas. Instead, the 2021 team delivered one of the most surprising and satisfying seasons in Ann Arbor in a generation. The Wolverines ended their infamous losing streak against Ohio State en route to the Big Ten title — Michigan's first since 2004 — and a subsequent trip to the playoff, where even a blowout semifinal loss to Georgia felt more like a footnote than a defining moment.

Now, sustaining that momentum is a different challenge. Harbaugh, finally vindicated at his alma mater, leapt at the opportunity in January to negotiate a return to the NFL; although his well-publicized deal with the Minnesota Vikings fell through in the end, the episode invited speculation that Harbaugh's days in the college game might still be numbered.

Much is riding on the unresolved QB dynamic between the incumbent, steady but limited veteran Cade McNamara, and rising sophomore J.J. McCarthy, a former five-star recruit who flashed star potential in a part-time role as a freshman. If McCarthy is ready to take over full time, he has the potential to take a relatively conservative attack to another level. If not, opposite a rebuilt defense, the encore to last year's triumphs may feel more like a hangover.

BRYCE YOUNG
HEISMAN
PREMIER PARTNER

Smart: Joe Robbins/Icon via Getty Images; Young: Rich Graessle/Icon via Getty Images

4 Clemson at a Crossroads

For most teams, a 10–3 season is a banner year. For Clemson in 2021, it was closer to a crisis. Besieged by injuries, the Tigers never looked like their usual, dominant selves, ceding the ACC crown for the first time since 2014 and trading their annual playoff slot for a trip to the Cheez-It Bowl. Nearly every game was a battle, with four of their six ACC wins coming by six points or fewer. The heir apparent at quarterback, DJ Uiagalelei, fell far short of expectations. In the end, even the momentum of a six-game winning streak was blunted by the departure of two pillars of the championship years, long-tenured coordinators Brent Venables and Tony Elliott, for head-coaching jobs.

Dabo Swinney is banking on continuity to carry the day. He promoted from within to fill both coordinator vacancies and only acknowledged the transfer portal in response to questions about his indifference to it. The lineup will essentially be a healthier version of the one that found its footing late last year.

Although Clemson is the favorite in the ACC, as usual, the distinction is more tentative than it's been in a long time. If they solve the QB question, the Tigers could be playoff contenders. And, as you can see from our Top 25, that's Athlon's prediction. But this is not a program that wants to get accustomed to thinking in terms of "if."

5 Buckeyes Bounce Back

In certain ways, Ohio State's loss to Michigan last November was a milestone: The upset snapped OSU's run of eight straight wins in the rivalry, four consecutive Big Ten titles and back-to-back playoff trips, all in the span of just a few hours. By the New Year, though, the outline of the next championship run was already beginning to shape. Despite all of their top pro prospects opting out of the Rose Bowl, the Buckeyes' dramatic, come-from-behind win over Utah served notice that the 2022 edition would be back in the thick of the national race.

All but three of OSU's 22 starters in Pasadena are back. The headliners on offense — prolific QB C.J. Stroud, versatile RB TreVeyon Henderson and electric WR Jaxon Smith-Njigba — all lived up to the hype in their first year as starters and will be arguably the best in the nation at their respective positions. Behind Smith-Njigba, the concentration of rising talent at receiver remains unmatched outside of Columbus. All but one starter returns on the O-line, and all but three on defense. As ever, where there's a vacancy, there's a blue-chip prospect to fill it.

As much talent is on hand, and as explosive as the offense figures to be, any improvement at all from the defense under new coordinator Jim Knowles is likely to make 2021's also-ran finish look like a blip on the radar.

6 Notre Dame: Betting the Future on Freeman

Over 12 years in South Bend, Brian Kelly coached in and won more games than anyone in Notre Dame history, but he wasn't truly close to winning the big one. The mandate for his successor, 36-year-old Marcus Freeman, is to get the Irish over the hump.

So far, so good. The locker room enthusiastically supported Freeman's promotion from defensive coordinator, and his counterpart on offense, Tommy Rees, opted to stay as chief play-caller despite being offered more money to follow Kelly to LSU. At the start of spring practice, Notre Dame also boasted the No. 1 recruiting class in the 2023 cycle according to 247Sports' Composite rankings, territory it never staked out under Kelly.

Bresee: Al Kooistra

BRYAN BRESEE

More immediately, the 2022 team has some significant holes to fill, beginning with quarterback, where sophomore Tyler Buchner is first in line. The schedule serves up Ohio State in the opener and November dates against Clemson and USC. If the Irish survive with their streak of five straight 10-win seasons intact, the Freeman era will be officially off to a running start.

7 Miami Makes its Move

Whether you loved or hated the bold, brash Miami teams of the Jimmy Johnson era and the talent-laden turn-of-the-century editions, you have to admit: College football is a lot more fun when the Canes are relevant.

So are championship expectations still realistic at The U? By throwing Manny Diaz overboard to make way for Mario Cristobal, the answer from the school brass is an emphatic yes.

Cristobal, a Miami native who was part of two national title teams as a player, was a natural target based on his local ties and his successful run at Oregon. He was an expensive one, too, commanding more than twice Diaz's salary as well as an ambitious investment in his staff. The school obliged, ponying up to poach OC Josh Gattis from Michigan and add former FBS head coaches Kevin Steele and Charlie Strong on defense — ambitious moves for a program not exactly known for its ability to dig deep.

The roster is largely a blank slate, with one important exception: redshirt sophomore QB Tyler Van Dyke, whose emergence last year pointed the way out of the doldrums. At 6'4", 224pounds, Van Dyke already looks like Miami's best pro prospect behind center in years. If the initial phase of the project has a chance, his right arm will be the main reason why.

8 Cajun-Flavored Gators

The Dan Mullen era at Florida ended abruptly, unraveling last fall over the course of just a few weeks. Startling as it was, though, the end was also depressingly familiar: Before Mullen, the bottom fell out on both of his predecessors, Will Muschamp and Jim McElwain, in similar fashion, running the Gators' record on head-coaching hires to 0-for-3 for the decade.

Enter Billy Napier. At his last stop, Louisiana, Napier turned the Ragin' Cajuns into an unlikely mid-major power: His last three seasons there were easily the best in school history, yielding 34 wins, back-to-back Top 25 finishes and, in 2021, the program's first outright conference championship in more than half a century. The man can coach. But can he recruit? In four years in Gainesville, Mullen signed just two 5-star prospects out of high school. The top priority for his successor is closing the gap in the Jimmys and Joes department.

On that front, Napier does have experience in high-stakes, hard-crootin' regimes, having paid his dues as an assistant under Dabo Swinney, Nick Saban and Jimbo Fisher. He was known in Lafayette as an energetic recruiter, landing the Sun Belt's top class per 247Sports' Composite rankings three years in a row from 2019-21. Florida, still less than 15 years removed from its last national title, remains one of the sport's premier opportunities. But as the last three guys who sat in Napier's seat can attest, it can be a short-lived one, too.

9 Baylor: Here to Stay?

On the field and off, Baylor has endured one of the most manic-depressive decades in the sport's history. The Art Briles years put the program on the map, until scandal turned it into a smoking crater. From the ashes, his successor, Matt Rhule, rebuilt the Bears into contenders in just three years before making the leap to the NFL — at which point they promptly crashed again, finishing 2–7 in 2020 under first-year head coach Dave Aranda. But the 2021 team bounced back even stronger, setting the school record for wins (12) en route to the Big 12 title and Baylor's first major bowl win since 1956.

Finally, some stability is in order. Aranda signed a contract extension through 2029 and kept both coordinators. In Year 3, the roster is almost fully reshaped in the staff's image. Despite a wave of departures for the next level (six Bears were drafted, all Rhule recruits), there is continuity on both lines and optimism behind center, where redshirt sophomore Blake Shapen emerged late last season and officially overtook incumbent Gerry Bohanon in the spring. A couple of big-ticket transfers on defense, DL Jaxon Player (Tulsa) and LB Josh White (LSU), filled immediate needs.

Beyond a relatively wide-open Big 12 race this season, there is no reason Baylor can't settle in as a year-in, year-out contender on Aranda's watch once the league's traditional heavies, Oklahoma and Texas, leave for the SEC. In the meantime, the defending conference champ has no intention of being demoted to a dark horse in 2022.

10 Shuffling the Deck

This year brings the latest round of college football realignment, and it's only just getting revved up. Consider 2022 the prelim, with the main event — Texas and Oklahoma to the SEC — yet to come.

This season, the upstart Sun Belt Conference, leaning heavily into its newfound identity as the flavor of the month among Group of Five conferences, has grown from 10 to 14 teams, adding C-USA refugees Marshall, Old Dominion and Southern Miss and newly minted FBS program James Madison, long an FCS power. C-USA, meanwhile, hangs on for one more year as an 11-team league, its long-term future in some doubt.

Bigger changes are looming. Houston, Cincinnati and UCF are bolting the American Athletic Conference for the Big 12 in time for the 2023 academic year, along with BYU, which is shedding its independent status for the security of a conference that is reeling from the impending losses of its bell cows but making the best of a changing landscape. In response, the AAC is poaching UAB, Charlotte, Florida Atlantic, North Texas, Rice and UTSA from C-USA, which in turn is putting out its welcome mat for Liberty, New Mexico State and a pair of soon-to-be FCS graduates — Jacksonville State and Sam Houston.

DAVE ARANDA

The biggest dominoes fall in the not-too-distant future, when the Sooners and Longhorns bolt their longtime conference home for the unfriendly confines of the SEC. Leaving a feisty middleweight league to take on college football's heavyweights is a bold move made necessary in the minds of OU and Texas bosses by the demands of today's NIL-driven, recruiting-dependent landscape.

Change is the only constant, and college football fans are about to get a big dose of it.

11 Sark 2.0

The 2010s were a lost decade at Texas, and Year 1 under Steve Sarkisian was more of the same. A wipeout loss at Arkansas set the tone; from there, the Longhorns never really recovered, spiraling into a six-game losing streak in Big 12 play. They collapsed against Oklahoma, blew double-digit leads over Oklahoma State and Baylor in consecutive weeks and sealed their descent in the standings with an overtime flop against lowly Kansas. At no point did they look like a team on the verge of being "back," by any definition.

Does that mean a reprieve from the annual ritual of preseason hype? Ha, no. Where there's talent, hope springs eternal, and if there's one thing Texas will never lack, it's talent. In addition to a top-five recruiting class, Sarkisian made a huge splash in the transfer portal by landing coveted QB Quinn Ewers, a Texas high school legend who initially spurned UT for Ohio State. The defense ... well, let's just say the only direction it can go under second-year coordinator Pete Kwiatkowski is up.

An early non-conference visit from Sarkisian's former employer, Alabama, should be revealing. Hang with the Tide, and it could be a catalyst for a run at the Big 12 crown in Texas' swan song in the conference.

12 Anything Goes in the Group of Five

Just when it was beginning to look like the CFP committee might never allow it to happen, Cincinnati shattered the glass ceiling in 2021 by becoming the first Group of Five team to crash the playoff from outside of the Power 5 conferences. Now, with the core of the playoff run moving on, the door is wide open for a new mid-major standard bearer to make its move.

In the American Athletic Conference, the major challenge to Cincinnati's throne will come from Houston, which returns the bulk of a team that finished 12–2, and UCF where head coach Gus Malzahn has assembled a depth chart packed with Power 5 transfers. (Remember, Houston and UCF are scheduled to make the leap along with Cincinnati to the Big 12 in 2023.) BYU, an-

Jonathan Bachman/Getty Images

other future member of the Big 12 expansion party, is essentially the same team that went 10–3 last year despite major attrition from an 11–1 season in 2020. Appalachian State, arguably the most consistent Group of Five program since leveling up to the FBS ranks in 2014, is primed for a big year in the Sun Belt. And never count out Boise State in the Mountain West.

Big non-conference games to circle on the schedule: Cincinnati's trip to Arkansas; App State's season-opening gambits against North Carolina and Texas A&M; and BYU's dates against Baylor, Oregon, Notre Dame and Arkansas. Back-to-back playoff bids may not be in the cards, but as for the major bowl slot reserved for the highest-ranked Group of Five champ, a brand-name victim on the résumé still goes a long way.

13 Huskers Book a Bowl Bid

Nebraska fans will be happy to know that they can make some December plans involving something other than holiday gatherings with annoying family members. Athlon Sports is projecting that the Cornhuskers will face old Big 12 rival Kansas State in the Guaranteed Rate Bowl. Hey, it's a start.

It's worth noting that the Huskers were a lot closer to a breakthrough in 2021 than it seems at first glance. By record, Nebraska's 3–9 finish in 2021 was one of the worst in school history. It was also one of the weirdest: All nine of the losses were decided by single digits, leaving these Huskers with the bizarre distinction of having scored exactly as many points against Big Ten opponents as they allowed — 239 to 239 — in the course of going 1–8 in conference play.

Regardless of the margins, with four straight losing seasons under his belt, there's no pretense that head coach Scott Frost can survive a fifth. The offseason was fueled by that sense of urgency. The Huskers were active in the transfer portal, bringing in a new quarterback, Texas starter Casey Thompson, to replace four-year starter Adrian Martinez, as well as projected starters at wide receiver, cornerback and O-line. They put a capper on their portal success by landing TCU D-lineman Ochaun Mathis, who will step in and start immediately. Frost was once regarded as a home-run hire. In Year 5, he gets one more chance to bring that promise to fruition.

CALEB WILLIAMS

Frost: Jay Biggerstaff; Williams: USC Athletics

SCOTT FROST

14 West Coast Blues

Nearly a decade into the playoff era, the question of expanding the format is less a matter of if than when. And among the power conferences, no league is more desperate to get it done than the Pac-12. Just two of the 32 playoff slots to date have gone to Pac-12 teams, most recently in 2016; in four out of five seasons since, the Pac-12 champ hasn't even cracked the top 10 in the CFP committee's final rankings.

It doesn't help that all of the usual suspects are in various states of flux. USC and Washington both fired their head coaches last fall on the way to finishing 4–8. Oregon lost head coach Mario Cristobal to his alma mater, Miami. Stanford, once a beacon of stability under David Shaw, posted a last-place finish in 2021. In four years under Chip Kelly, UCLA is seven games below .500. At Arizona State, Herm Edwards was forced to replace most of his staff this offseason due to an NCAA investigation that could eventually claim his job as well.

The playoff drought can't go on forever. But until one of the would-be contenders finally puts it all together — steady Utah and resurgent USC are the top candidates this season, and both are in Athlon's preseason top 10 — the Pac-12 race remains a strictly regional affair.

15 USC: The Missing Linc?

No program on the West Coast or anywhere else has underachieved over the past decade quite like USC, which has cycled through one uninspired, locally connected coaching hire after another in its quest for the next Pete Carroll. The tendency to keep it in the family was one of the many reasons their poaching of Oklahoma's Lincoln Riley over Thanksgiving weekend seemed to come out of nowhere: For the first time in ages, the Trojans went big, sparing no expense to reassert their place among the sport's heavy hitters.

A roster overhaul began via the transfer portal, including three of Riley's former players at OU. The headliner, sophomore QB Caleb Williams, is a game-changing talent who seized the Sooners' starting job as a true freshman and arrived in January to legitimate Heisman hype. The rest of the lineup has a lot more to prove.

In a league ripe for the taking, Williams' presence alone is enough to make USC a preseason favorite for the Rose Bowl. That in itself would represent a dramatic overnight turnaround. But for their bet on Riley to pay off, it would be just the first step.

Historic HIRES

These Marquee Coaching Changes Have Reshaped College Football

LINCOLN RILEY

USC Athletics

BY STEVEN GODFREY

In the course of just over a week right after Thanksgiving, the college football coaching landscape exploded and reorganized itself. Sure, we've seen massive coaching hires and fires as a practice in this industry, but nothing quite like the sequence of moves that impacted six major Power 5 programs in such a short time. Starting on Nov. 28 and ending on Dec. 6, three of the biggest openings of the 2021 coaching cycle — USC, LSU and Miami — were filled when those schools poached from three otherwise venerable, steady contenders — Oklahoma, Notre Dame and Oregon.

The shock has subsided, but the impact will be felt for a long time to come. What exactly does it say for college football that so many power programs opted to take established winners away from the competitors? What does it say that they could? And most importantly for fans, media and the rumor mill, who won and who lost? Assigning outright winners and losers is naive and premature at this point, but let's take a moment to examine the perception and reality of the hires and their effect on the future of the sport after college football's great Coach Poach.

THE MOVE: Lincoln Riley leaves Oklahoma for USC

The Trojans set the market on the 2021 coaching cycle, firing Clay Helton way, way back on Sept. 13. It was a move conceived during the pandemic and held over to '21 for budgetary reasons, and once Stanford whipped the Trojans, Heritage Hall had its excuse. Think of it this way: Helton was fired so early in '21 that he had time to interview and be hired by another FBS program, Georgia Southern, before the season ended.

For basically the entire regular season, speculation ran wild as to whether or not third-year AD Mike Bohn would be free to make a hire without any tampering from the program's notoriously involved boosters and alumni. Any doubts about USC's country club meddling were killed with a bombshell: On Nov. 28, Bohn poached Lincoln Riley from Oklahoma, humbling the Sooners and shocking the college football world.

The Statement Made

Hoo, boy — just pick one: Riley walked out on an OU program still technically alive for playoff contention and with the SEC on the horizon in coming years, so, to Sooner fans (and Finebaum nation), he's a fraud for abandoning his kids and a coward for ducking an invite to the nation's toughest conference. The Trojans want to spin Riley's choice to leave Norman as proof they're still among the very best in the nation, and that the most vital program west of the Rockies can compete for national titles again — and soon.

The Reality

The Trojans were fine-to-good at times under Helton, but there was zero energy around the program locally and nationally. And in the modern era, USC's success has always been accompanied by a Hollywood level of buzz. Riley is young and his offense is marketable, but both the Trojans and the Pac-12 have endured a brutal decade-plus of irrelevance. Taking OU quarterback Caleb Williams along with him to L.A. is a big, splashy move, but take it from Californian-turned-Buckeye C.J. Stroud, who has criticized the lack of excitement at Pac-12 campuses: West Coast college football is way behind. Riley has to win back Southern California's wealth of talent before he can win national titles.

Back in Norman, it's arguable that new head coach Brent Venables is more of a cultural fit for the Sooners than Riley ever was, and that new offensive coordinator Jeff Lebby, most recently at Ole Miss, can maintain OU's offensive reputation.

Who's the Short-Term Winner?

Oklahoma is the jilted lover in this equation, but they're also in much better shape … for now. OU has some time (one year? two? three?) left in a very manageable league before heading South. Because of OU's dominance in the Big 12, there's a better chance you'll see the Sooners back in the CFP before Riley can get USC up to speed, which, yes, might be a big reason their former coach decided to work for a program in a similarly dominant relationship with its league.

What Could Happen?

One thing that's certain: Riley is Public Enemy No. 1 now and forever in the Sooner State. That won't change whether Venables is wildly successful or not, and OU fans will be actively rooting against USC as long as Riley's their head coach. But with the excitement — and uncertainty — of the SEC looming, if OU falls from the perennial playoff contender status afforded by the Big 12 to something closer to a Florida or Texas A&M in the SEC, while at the same time Riley reestablishes USC's dominance of a weak Pac-12 (which is very, very similar to how OU currently treats the Big 12), Riley should be considered the winner.

It has nothing to do with mansions in L.A. and everything to do with the ability to land and develop talent that can get you in the national title hunt with the most frequency. That's it.

Who Needs To Calm Down?

Oklahoma: the fans, the program, the state legislature, just … all of it. Upon Riley's sudden departure, it became painfully apparent that this fan base hadn't had to deal with an actual head-coaching opening since 1999, way back when Bob Stoops replaced John Blake.

Predictably, OU message boards and Twitter have been vociferous in minimizing Riley's success and demonizing him for his move, but so have established media in the state, not to mention multiple elected officials trying to create publicity stunts by denouncing their former head coach.

There's a fine line here — college football thrives on this specific kind of vitriol, but for a blueblood program like OU, too much of the "scorned ex" behavior risks recasting the entire brand as something less than it actually is. There's a good chance all this calms down once actual football starts in 2022, but for now, there's too much attention on L.A. and not enough on Venables.

Insider Take

"What if everybody wins this one? No one in Norman wants to hear that, but it could happen. I can see both of these teams in the top 20 for the next 10 years. Brent is a damn good coach, and he did the smartest thing a coordinator turned first-time HC could do — he went out and got a dynamic group of assistants to work the other side of the ball. You don't hire a guy like Lebby and ask him to slow it down, not in that league. Lincoln's got way more pressure on him. That job is bigger than the football games you're coaching. The whole West Coast gets down when USC is down. You've got Alabama and Ohio State raiding that city; it's unlike any other time in history. If you're gonna dominate, truly dominate at USC, then years from now we're talking about the Trojans owning L.A. again and getting five-stars out of Dallas and Atlanta. That's a long way off." — *A Power 5 coordinator*

■ THE MOVE: Mario Cristobal leaves Oregon for Miami

Ever since Bear Bryant uttered the words upon leaving Texas A&M for Alabama, the phrase "Mama called" has become college football shorthand for a coach or player leaving one perfectly good situation for another closer to — or directly at — home. That's undoubtedly the case here, as Miami lured one of its own all the way back from Eugene, Ore., when Ducks head coach Mario Cristobal came home on Dec. 6

The Statement Made

For Oregon, the Ducks have done everything possible off the field to maintain national relevance after the Chip Kelly era, only to lose their last two head coaches to Florida jobs. Former head coach Willie Taggart (a Seminoles fan and Florida native) left Oregon after one season when Florida State opened in 2017. Cristobal, then on staff, was promoted as his replacement, only to pull the same move with The U four years later.

In both situations, going home to rebuild a former national power was the clear motivator, and neither coach had a single bad thing to say about the potential, culture or resources at Oregon. But perception is reality, and Oregon is desperate to become a destination job, not a stopover for coaches before they get their dream jobs in warmer weather. (New Ducks head coach Dan Lanning is a Missouri native, for what it's worth.)

For the Canes, Mario was the only name on their entire list and a sign to the entire CFB landscape that Cristobal saw enough potential in UM's new leadership to come home and attempt a rebuild.

> In the course of just over a week right after Thanksgiving, the college football coaching landscape exploded and reorganized itself.

The Reality

Miami was very, very desperate to get Cristobal. It was a one-name coaching search, so much so that now-former head coach Manny Diaz (also a Miami native) was still on the road recruiting throughout the extremely public courtship of Cristobal by UM because many thought he would be retained if Cristobal elected to stay in Eugene.

For years, chatter about Cristobal coming home bounced around coaching circles, but most people thought it wouldn't come to fruition because of UM's myriad dysfunctions. That changed when Clemson AD Dan Radakovich came to Coral Gables, and the chatter accelerated when ESPN's Kirk Herbstreit excoriated the Canes on live TV for failing to fund, operate and function like a real national title contender.

Also, Mama literally called: At one point during the Ducks' season, Cristobal came home to Miami to see his mother, who was recovering from an illness. Just like Taggart before him, Cristobal considered only one job to be worth leaving an otherwise fantastic gig at Oregon.

Fate happened to strike the Ducks the same way twice, but there's still plenty of frustration. After both Kelly and former Kelly assistant Mark Helfrich took Oregon to national title games, outside hires have ultimately betrayed this wholly unique and entirely capable title-contending program. Lanning has a ton of potential, but Ducks fans have seen all this before.

Who's the Short-Term Winner?

Miami has much more buzz coming out on the winning end of the hire, due in part to Cristobal's aggressively assembled all-star coaching staff (Kevin Steele, Charlie Strong, Josh Gattis, Joe Salave'a), plus a potential star at quarterback in Tyler Van Dyke. Also, Oregon draws the ugly task of playing Lanning's old team, Georgia, to open the season. Without any referendum on the long term for either program, it's likely that Miami sees more of the spotlight in 2022.

What Could Happen?

The long-term ask of Cristobal is as massive as it might be impossible: Return the Canes to national title glory. The blueprint old Miami teams used to become a national power — closing ranks around the "State of Miami" and owning recruiting at every high school program south of Interstate 4 — isn't possible in 2022. Every major program in college football has a South Florida recruiter today, and it's not possible to "hide" talented recruits or find an under-recruited area in the age of the internet database and star rankings.

Miami fans would probably settle for winning the ACC — something the Canes still haven't done since arriving in 2003 — before they start thinking about national titles.

Who Needs To Calm Down?

Miami fans, actually. The Canes brought their guy home, and we've mentioned that Cristobal electing to return is a validation of the program, but there's a tremendous amount of work to be done here. It's true that The U hasn't been a national title contender in two decades, but even that statement doesn't accurately represent the state of this program: The Canes have one division title and one 10-win season and are 5–13 against top-10 opponents since joining the league in 2004. Since the end of Larry Coker's tenure, Miami has had more vacated seasons than New Year's Day bowl appearances.

Insider Take

"These are two unrelated situations; they just have a coach [Cristobal] in common. Oregon is a top-25 job, but back East you would have a tough time arguing it's a top-10 or even top-15 job because of their league. That's not something Oregon can fix on their own, and it is held against them when these top-tier coaches are evaluating jobs. The entire West Coast has suffered these last few years, and that drags down Oregon. When they dropped a game to a bad Stanford team, the nation reacts differently than if a SEC team loses a road conference game. So at one loss, they're on the outside looking in for a postseason bid. … Miami has Miami problems, and if anyone can break through and get it fixed, it's Mario. That doesn't mean it will be easy. On pure football terms, Manny would be unfireable if the staff hadn't tried to get D'Eriq King back out there and switched quarterbacks to start the season. This wasn't a bad team. … This is a program that wants to be nationally relevant again. Are they going to listen to Mario and do what it takes?" — *A CFB coaching agent*

THE MOVE: Brian Kelly leaves Notre Dame for LSU

From the day that new LSU AD Scott Woodward stepped on campus, the clock started ticking on Ed Orgeron. It didn't matter that Orgeron had led the Tigers to a perfect national title season in 2019; forces in Baton Rouge had never fully aligned behind the brusque Cajun, and Woodward, a native son, came home to his dream job with a reputation for delivering headline-making coach hires (Jimbo Fisher to Texas A&M, Chris Petersen to Washington).

After a delayed public announcement that Orgeron would leave following the end of the regular season (Orgeron's post-natty 11-11 record enabled Woodward to clean house), LSU's search dominated the rumor mill, with names like Lincoln Riley, Mel Tucker and Jimbo Fisher (more than once) considered to be guaranteed at different times.

Woodward ended up taking Notre Dame's Brian Kelly, who was quietly interested in openings at USC and Florida as well, to replace Orgeron. Despite the fact that he'd succeeded in creating a second act as Irish head coach (Notre Dame went 54-9 after a 4-8 campaign in 2016), Kelly wanted out — either to the NFL or to a Power 5 program that he felt would have easier access to national title-caliber talent.

What exactly does it say for college football that so many power programs opted to take established winners away from the competitors?

BRIAN KELLY

Gus Stark/LSU Athletics

The Statement Made

The move made history — no sitting Notre Dame coach has left for another college football job since 1933, when Hunk Anderson left for NC State after a losing season — and indirectly communicated that Kelly believed Notre Dame couldn't win a national title. After all, the Irish had found success in the playoff era with their faux-membership in the ACC but got crushed by stalwarts Clemson and Alabama in 2020.

For LSU, Woodward catered directly to a core of highly influential supporters who have longed for a head coach they could hold up as a CEO and statesman on par with their former leader, Nick Saban. Kelly's polish and demeanor are the exact opposite of Orgeron, and the belief among LSU's boosters is that Kelly was held back by Notre Dame, not the other way around.

MARCUS FREEMAN

Peter Brouillet

The Reality

The hottest debate of the offseason has been whether or not Kelly or the Irish were at fault for the program's postseason ineptitude. The general consensus in coaching circles is that Kelly felt he'd done all he could possibly do at the program following the 2020 run, and that in order to win a national title, he'd have to coach somewhere else. His replacement, Marcus Freeman, has already prompted many in the industry to predict that Notre Dame will close on the handful of difference-making superstars needed to keep the Irish in games against the Bamas of the world. But if anyone says they're convinced it's one or the other, they're lying right now. Only time will tell.

Down South, Woodward has been hard at work convincing everyone that Kelly was his first choice and that Fisher, his close friend and former employee in College Station, was never the intended target. The exact pecking order of the search will certainly never see daylight, but Kelly wasn't at the very top. However, that doesn't mean he can't be successful in Baton Rouge. The problem is that both the Orgeron and Les Miles eras are considered to be failures by many Tiger fans who expect to keep pace with Bama, despite the fact that both of those coaches won a national title.

Who's the Short-Term Winner?

If you're looking for who has a better shot at making the playoff first, it's Notre Dame. Freeman was defensive coordinator for the Irish last season and retained key assistants like offensive coordinator Tommy Rees. The Irish open at Ohio State, but they can survive an early loss and remain in playoff contention.

However: LSU's turmoil has stretched over multiple seasons, basically since the day after the Tigers beat Clemson in the Superdome. Kelly could deliver a pedestrian eight-win bowl season, and, if the headlines die down and recruiting looks strong, fans would respond positively. The same can't be said if Freeman's first season ends with fewer than 10 wins.

What Could Happen?

There's only one question to answer: Is Kelly right about Notre Dame? If Freeman can recruit better than his predecessor and the Irish win a national title (or even lose in a much closer fashion against one of the handful of top programs), Kelly's reputation will naturally suffer. However, if Kelly does what every LSU head coach has done since Saban's hire in 2000 — win a national title — while the Irish maintain their status as nationally elite but not champions, BK's move will make sense.

Make no mistake, though: LSU fans are expecting a dynasty of consistent, scandal-free titles and playoff appearances. While 99 percent of college football would be thrilled to boast three nattys in 20 years and elite SEC status, LSU is chasing the dust of its former architect Saban, which is why the idiosyncrasies of Miles and Orgeron — as well as their on-field coaching shortcomings — prompted changes.

Who Needs To Calm Down?

Everyone involved. LSU fans should avoid the shorthand prognostication of a head coach who has never recruited in the SEC, and Notre Dame fans should extend some level of patience to a first-time head coach taking over arguably the most famous program in college athletics.

There's one facet of Kelly's working theory that's definitely true: These are wildly different jobs, in different cultures, and with wildly different standards and practices. Comparing the two is a fool's errand, but Kelly has prompted exactly that with his move.

Insider Take

"This entire situation boils down to recruiting. You're gonna win at both of these programs. Well, you're going to win, or you're going to be fired very quickly. We know that. Kelly's certainly not wrong about Notre Dame's standards. They're difficult, and it's not the easiest place in the world to plug in 25 superstars and go. That's Bama, that's Georgia. But does that mean he recruited as effectively as possible? Maybe Marcus is the right coach at the right place and the right time. He's already called out the Irish for not managing its brand to appeal to five-star kids in cities as much as it appeals to the 50-year-olds in the stands. The very early returns are positive. … For LSU, BK has to learn how to be cutthroat. They have to be creating top-5 classes immediately. He has a great staff around him that knows how to do that, but don't kid yourself — the head man closes. Look at Bama, look at Georgia. That's what he signed up for." — *An SEC assistant coach*

Money Talk$

Name, Image and Likeness Raises the Stakes for Players and Schools Alike

BY ERIC ADELSON

Pittsburgh Athletics

As the football world focused its attention on the NFL Draft in late April, a headline-stealing report emerged: New USC head coach Lincoln Riley and the Trojans were testing the limits of college football's new name, image and likeness policy, attempting to lure reigning Biletnikoff Award-winning wideout **Jordan Addison** of the Pittsburgh Panthers into the transfer portal and on to SoCal via a reportedly massive NIL enticement.

The reactions were swift and vehement. Some accused the Trojans of tampering, since Addison had not yet entered the transfer portal when the reports of the offer emerged. Others simply called it the sport's new normal.

If it weren't obvious before, it is now: Free agency has officially come to college football. Nick Saban himself observed that NIL "creates a situation where you can basically buy players."

The fallout of the Addison case is still developing and will doubtless reverberate for months to come, but it's only the latest example of college football's Brave New World of unfettered capitalism and free-market competition.

The first year of NIL has brought money and mirth, but also plenty of pitfalls. Addison's reported move to USC — a school that new Pitt quarterback Kedon Slovis had left only months before — felt to some like a foreboding whoosh down the slippery slope toward chaos. The effects on the sport itself, some seemingly quite worrisome, are only starting to come into view. But we do know this: empowering student-athletes to profit off their name, image and likeness has yielded a gold rush that is distinctly American — equal parts optimistic and opportunistic.

And in a distinctly American manner, it's the older folks, not the kids, who are most likely to screw it up.

$ $ $

It's great that college football players can seize their own slice of capitalism, but only for those who have people around them who will help protect them from errors. And that is not the case for every player entering this new reality. Some players will give too much away to agents. Some will be oblivious to the need to prepare for tax season. Some will eagerly sign deals that will look good on their face but carry with them a lot of extra work over a lot of extra time.

Strain has already emerged in some corners of the college football world. When reports of Addison's departure from Pitt emerged, Slovis tweeted a photo of himself with the caption "Culture wins." The loyalty of a lot of players will be questioned, both loudly and quietly.

This fall, as many more NIL deals are struck and the details made public, the potential for locker-room envy will no doubt play a part in team chemistry at many programs.

"The average D-I Power 5 starter will be paid six figures or more," says Blake Lawrence, CEO of Opendorse, which works with many top athletic programs on NIL frameworks. "It'll be $10 million per year per campus. If you are a Power 5 starting quarterback, it'll be $500,000. It's bigger than you think; it's just not publicized."

Where does that literal arms race leave the lowly walk-on, or the backup who waits his turn? That's a question worth asking — especially considering that NIL deals may keep stars on campus for an extra year if the money is good. But there's another question worth asking, too: What happens if the biggest quarterback recruit falters? What does that do to his mindset?

Quarterback Spencer Rattler was benched midway through last season, and he ended up leaving Oklahoma for South Carolina. His earnings power (and his Instagram follower count) held up, but a lot of an athlete's brand is tied up in the promise of things yet to materialize. If there is an erosion of expectations, that can wear away at marketing potential over time.

Which brings us to the other wild card in the NIL fallout: the transfer portal. Just like the grass is always greener, the green is always greener. A transfer to a new campus brings plenty of untapped marketing opportunities. More than 3,000 players entered the transfer portal between last August and the start of 2022 alone, according to Axios. Clemson's Dabo Swinney called it "chaos" and "tampering galore."

It's a re-recruiting season, of sorts, and sometimes it gives way to a re-re-recruiting, as some athletes are entering the portal multiple times. That means the prized recruit that got away may never really get away, at least in the mind of the local car dealer.

If you think all this will cause unlimited angst and headaches for college coaches, you would be right. Ole Miss head coach Lane Kiffin has said that de facto "free agency" is already in place, and players will "go to where they get paid the most."

If social media followers bring in deals more than on-the-field performance, you can just imagine what kind of perverse incentives that will create among players who are already addicted to seeing their likes count skyrocket. Making matters worse (for the coaches anyway), the NIL recruiting process will start as early as the actual recruiting process starts — or even earlier.

And one of the questions recruits will have is: Does the school have a collective? That's a nifty name for a start-up company devoted to helping facilitate deals for athletes. The people behind the collectives can be anybody from superfans to business executives (or both).

"About one out of three Power 5 schools has a collective," says Lawrence. "Every Power 5 school, by the end of 2022, will have a collective."

Translation: Expect many more people to have skin in the game — for better or for worse.

But isn't this … um … just basically funneling money to the players? Technically, it can't be pay-to-play. The student-athlete must actually do something of value (whatever that is), and the actual school can't be tied to the collective. But then there are examples like an executive paying the tuition of BYU walk-ons. Isn't that pay-to-play? It depends on how you define it, and no one is quite sure yet how to define it.

And what happens if the collective has a collective opinion on who should be starting at quarterback?

"It will happen when there is a leader of a collective that disagrees with the head coach on the quarterback recruit — like the GM disagreeing with the head coach in the NFL," says Lawrence. "At the end of the day, that will be a challenge."

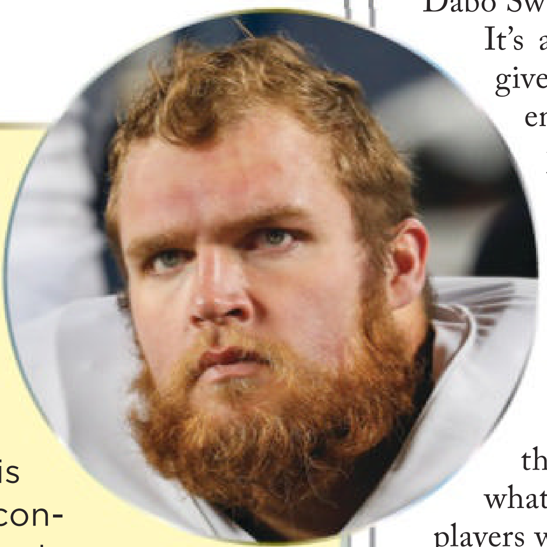
It all goes back to the shoot-first-ask-questions-later vibe of American capitalism and American football.

"Mistakes are gonna get made," says Peter Schoenthal, CEO of sports management company Athliance. "There will be athletes that overextend themselves. That will correct itself. We are all gonna learn from one another and our peers."

What might be lost here is not necessarily the games on the field, but rather something more intangible. These are supposed to be the best four years of your life, and there's no question that the pressure of football plus grades plus NIL requirements will take a toll on more than a few athletes.

"That might be a downfall," says Lawrence. "For most of these kids, it's the most important time in their life — making the most of their time as student-athletes."

Silver Linings



AP Photo/Paul Sancya

Dillan Gibbons didn't enter Notre Dame with any dreams of changing the football landscape. Then he met Irish fan Timothy Donovan.

It was after a home game at Notre Dame Stadium when Gibbons first saw Donovan in his wheelchair. The two made eye contact and Gibbons came over and gave the Irish fan his game gloves. Donovan has Charcot-Marie-Tooth — a disease that causes nerve damage in his arms and legs — and the brief meeting stuck with Gibbons.

"Having an interaction with Timothy — it constantly reminded me to do more," Gibbons says. "It flipped a switch in me to do more."

Fast-forward to the end of his Notre Dame career, when Gibbons, an offensive lineman, decided to transfer to Florida State to be closer to home. The state of Florida had a plan to enact NIL legislation in 2021, and the light bulb in Gibbons' mind grew bright: Here was his chance, maybe, to help Timothy.

On July 1, 2021 — the day the Florida law took effect — Gibbons posted his "first try" at NIL. It was a GoFundMe to help Timothy with medical expenses and a chance to see Notre Dame play Florida State in Tallahassee on September 5.

"The first 12 hours, it got a few thousand [dollars]," Gibbons recalls. "By the 20th hour, it jumped to $15,000. I got in my truck, heading back home, and I got an alert — Super Coffee donated $15,000. My mom called me crying. She was freaking out. I had to pull over. Being by myself, I had to call the Donovans. It's hard not to cry."

Gibbons named his new initiative "Big Man Big Heart" – purposefully leaving his name out of it. "No one knows who I am," he says. "No one cares." Yet in a way, his trailblazing made him a name that will last in name, image and likeness lore.

Gibbons is trying every day to make the most of his time — and his chance to help others. "To be able to help people," he says through tears. "And inspire them a little through college football."

In that sense, NIL is one of the best things to happen to the sport.

2022 FCS PREVIEW

BY CRAIG HALEY

FCS ALL-AMERICA TEAM

OFFENSE

QB – Xavier Shepherd 6-0/205/Jr. Kennesaw State
RB – Isaiah Ifanse 5-10/202/Sr. Montana State
RB – Isaiah Davis 6-1/220/Jr. South Dakota State
FB – Hunter Luepke 6-1/234/Sr. North Dakota State
WR – Xavier Gipson 5-9/170/Jr. Stephen F. Austin
WR – Taylor Grimes 5-11/190/Sr. UIW
TE – Tucker Kraft 6-5/255/Jr. South Dakota State
C – Matthan Hatchie 6-2/310/Sr. Tennessee-Martin
OL – Michael Corbi 6-3/335/Sr. Villanova
OL – Cody Mauch 6-6/303/Sr. North Dakota State
OL – Mason McCormick 6-4/310/Sr. South Dakota State
OL – McClendon Curtis 6-7/340/Sr. Chattanooga

DEFENSE

DL – Isaiah Land 6-4/215/Sr. Florida A&M
DL – Nate Lynn 6-3/265/Sr. William & Mary
DL – Devonnsha Maxwell 6-2/296/Sr. Chattanooga
DL – Josiah Silver 6-2/234/So. New Hampshire
LB – Ryan Greenhagen 6-1/245/Sr. Fordham
LB – Patrick O'Connell, 6-2/225/Sr. Montana
LB – Stone Snyder 6-3/240/Sr. VMI
DB – Anthony Adams 6-0/185/Sr. Portland State
DB – Justin Ford 6-2/190/Sr. Montana
DB – Michael Tutsie 5-11/193/Sr. North Dakota State
DB – Kedrick Whitehead 5-11/195/Sr. Delaware

SPECIALISTS

K – Matthew Cook 5-11/180/Jr. Northern Iowa
P – Grant Burkett 6-1/180/So. Missouri State
KR – Malik Flowers 6-2/200/Sr. Montana
PR – Jah'Marae Sheread 5-7/175/Sr. Florida A&M

PROJECTED PLAYOFF QUALIFIERS

Campbell (Big South champion)
Chattanooga (Southern champion)
Davidson (Pioneer champion)
Delaware (at-large bid)
Duquesne (Northeast champion)
ETSU (at-large bid)
Holy Cross (Patriot champion)
Kennesaw State (ASUN champion)
Mercer (at-large bid)
Missouri State (at-large bid)
Montana (Big Sky champion)
Montana State (at-large bid)
Murray State (Ohio Valley champion)
Southeastern Louisiana (Southland champion)
North Dakota State (Missouri Valley champion)
Northern Iowa (at-large bid)
Rhode Island (at-large bid)
Sacramento State (at-large bid)
South Dakota State (at-large bid)
Southern Illinois (at-large bid)
Stephen F. Austin (WAC champion)
UIW (at-large bid)
Villanova (CAA champion)
Weber State (at-large bid)

1 North Dakota State

(14–1, 7–1 Missouri Valley)

Surprise, surprise — yeah, hardly — the FCS champion Bison are favored to build on their nine national titles in an 11-season span. The depth in the offensive backfield is extraordinary; fullback Hunter Luepke was the outstanding player of the national championship game after scoring three touchdowns, and TaMerik Williams, Dominic Gonnella and Kobe Johnson would be 1,000-yard rushers in any other program.

2 South Dakota State

(11–4, 5–3 Missouri Valley)

Quarterback Mark Gronowski, the MVFC Offensive Player of the Year during the 2020-21 spring season, missed the fall with a knee injury but returns to an explosive offense that boasts running back Isaiah Davis (1,519 yards, 8.0-yard average in 17 career games), tight end Tucker Kraft and wide receiver twins Jadon and Jaxon Janke. Linebacker Adam Bock (125 tackles as a sophomore) and defensive linemen Caleb Sanders and Reece Winkelman will keep the hits coming.

3 Montana

(10–3, 6–2 Big Sky)

Linebacker Patrick O'Connell and cornerback Justin Ford (FCS-high nine interceptions) finished third and fourth, respectively, in the Buck Buchanan Award voting, and safety Robby Hauck, the coach's son, has a chance to reach 500 career tackles with 364 entering his senior campaign. Transfer quarterback Lucas Johnson went 8–1 as a starter at San Diego State last fall.

4 Montana State

(12–3, 7–1 Big Sky)

The Bobcats and second-year head coach Brent Vigen have to replace key senior losses from their national runner-up squad, but equally important is quarterback Tommy Mellott's production following an ankle injury suffered in the defeat to North Dakota State. Mellott, the breakout star of the playoffs, can combine with tailback Isaiah Ifanse (1,623 yards as a junior, 3,461 in career) for a devastating ground duo.

5 Missouri State

(8–4, 6–2 Missouri Valley)

Nobody foresaw the Bears' turnaround in coach Bobby Petrino's first two seasons — a share of the MVFC's spring title and a second-place finish in the fall — but they were 0–2 in the playoffs. The return of 16 starters makes the next step realistic. Quarterback Jason Shelley accounted for 3,780 yards of total offense and 32 TDs while earning MVFC Offensive Player of the Year.

6 Sacramento State

(9–3, 8–0 Big Sky)

Sac State has come up snake eyes in the playoffs despite capturing Big Sky titles in head coach Troy Taylor's two seasons (2019 and '21). His Hornets utilize a quarterback rotation with Jake Dunniway and Asher O'Hara, and the offensive weapons run deep.

7 Southern Illinois

(8–5, 5–3 Missouri Valley)

Returning starter Nic Baker can distribute the ball in all directions, including to wide receiver Avante Cox (204 career receptions) and running backs Javon Williams Jr. (36 total TDs in his career), Romeir Elliott and Justin Strong.

8 Villanova

(10–3, 7–1 CAA)

The new largest FCS conference (13 teams in 2022, 14 in '23) may have the best title race. Quarterback Connor Watkins takes over the defending co-champ's offense, and it's replete with playmakers. Transfer linebackers Danny Damico (UAlbany) and Antonio Montero (Rice) will make an impact.

9 Kennesaw State

(11–2, 7–0 Big South)

In a competitive ASUN debut, Kennesaw State (49–10 since 2017) is the team to beat. Triple-option QB Xavier Shepherd led the FCS with 23 rushing touchdowns and threw for 15 more. Elusive running back Iaan Cousin also will benefit from the return of three starters on the offensive line.

7 MUST-SEE MATCHUPS

FLORIDA A&M VS. JACKSON STATE (Sept. 4 in Miami)

SOUTH DAKOTA STATE AT MISSOURI STATE (Sept. 24)

CHATTANOOGA AT ETSU (Oct. 1)

SOUTH DAKOTA STATE AT NORTH DAKOTA STATE (Oct. 15)

VILLANOVA AT WILLIAM & MARY (Nov. 12)

YALE AT HARVARD (Nov. 19)

MONTANA AT MONTANA STATE (Nov. 19)

10 Stephen F. Austin

(8–4, 4–1 AQ7)

Quarterback Trae Self (3,201 yards, 28 TDs) throws to dynamic wide receiver Xavier Gipson, who's averaged over 40 yards on 30 career TD receptions. The defense features leading tacklers Myles Heard (safety) and Brevin Randle (linebacker) and 6'6" pass rusher BJ Thompson (9.5 sacks).

11 Holy Cross

(10–3, 6–0 Patriot)

Holy Cross is primed for its fourth straight Patriot title with a highly experienced squad under head coach Bob Chesney. Linebacker Jacob Dobbs (137 tackles, 9.5 sacks) was named Patriot Defensive Player of the Year. Quarterback Matthew Sluka (25 total TDs) could claim offensive honors.

12 Chattanooga

(6–5, 5–3 Southern)

In a deep SoCon, the Mocs may have the most talent. Their defense is the conference's best. Quarterback Cole Copeland gives the ball to Ailym Ford (1,071 yards, 11 TDs) and Reggie Davis, while tight end Chris James is a red zone weapon.

13 Weber State

(6–5, 5–3 Big Sky)

Full, healthy seasons out of quarterback Bronson Barron and running back Josh Davis could help the Wildcats to rebound in a big way. Running back Dontae McMillan, wide receiver Ty MacPherson and cornerback Eddie Heckard are other key returnees.

14 Rhode Island

(7–4, 4–4 CAA)

The Rams are strong in the trenches, which is welcome news to quarterback Kasim Hill and the running backs (including Kevin Brown Jr., who's back from injury), plus for cornerback Jordan Jones (six interceptions) and safety Oneil "Buzz" Robinson, operating on the back end of the defense.

15 Eastern Washington

(10–3, 6–2 Big Sky)

The schedule, including matchups at Oregon and Florida, may prove too hard to overcome for one of the FCS' consistent powers. Longtime backup QB Gunner Talkington seeks to step in for Walter Payton Award recipient Eric Barriere. The Eagles always have a wave of wide receivers.

16 UIW

(10–3, 7–1 Southland)

Two-year Nicholls starting QB Lindsey Scott Jr. arrives to team with wide receivers Taylor Grimes (87 receptions, 1,145 yards, 15 TDs) and Robert Ferrel (74, 815, 9). Linebacker Kelechi Anyalebechi's 130 tackles set the program's single-season record.

17 Mercer

(7–3, 6–2 Southern)

The Bears return seven of their top eight tacklers, including first-team all-conference selections Solomon Zubairu (defensive end) and Lance Wise (safety), and a veteran offense that features quarterback Fred Payton and running back Fred Davis (14 TDs).

18 ETSU

(11–2, 7–1 Southern)

The defending SoCon champion returns 1,000-yard rusher Jacob Saylors, quarterback Tyler Riddell and top receiver Will Huzzie. Sophomore cornerback Alijah Huzzie is one of the Bucs' best players already.

19 Southeastern Louisiana

(9–4, 6–2 Southland)

New quarterback Cephus Johnson III can rely on wide receivers Gage Larvadain and CJ Turner. It will be hard to have a better secondary than one including Ferlando Jordan (11 career interceptions), Zy Alexander and Brandon Barbee.

20 Delaware

(5–6, 3–5 CAA)

Ryan Carty, the offensive coordinator of Sam Houston's 2020 national championship squad, is now guiding his alma mater. His Blue Hens have a stout defense behind linebacker Johnny Buchanan and defensive backs Kedrick Whitehead and Noah Plack. Quarterback Nolan Henderson, who's 10-2 as a starter the last two seasons, is ready to connect with wide receivers Thyrick Pitts and Jalyn Witcher.

21 Northern Iowa

(6–6, 4–4 Missouri Valley)

Theo Day's 14.9 yards per completion led the FCS, although long-range kicker Matthew Cook (53 career field goals) may be the No. 1 offensive weapon. Middle linebacker Spencer Cuvelier and free safety Benny Sapp III joined Cook on the All-MVFC first team.

22 Jackson State

(11–2, 9–0 SWAC)

After the Tigers won their first SWAC championship since 2007, head coach Deion Sanders was named the FCS Coach of the Year (Eddie Robinson Award), and his quarterback, son Shedeur, the Most Outstanding Freshman Player in FCS (Jerry Rice Award). The signing of five-star cornerback Travis Hunter adds to the biggest FCS story outside Fargo, N.D.

23 William & Mary

(6–5, 4–4 CAA)

The Tribe return 10 defensive starters, led by All-America end Nate Lynn, who's coming off a 12-sack campaign. Head coach Mike London has two quarterbacks, Darius Wilson and Hollis Mathis, capable of operating the CAA's top-ranked rushing attack.

24 Eastern Kentucky

(7–4, 4–2 AQ7)

The Colonels have an experienced lineup for their first go-around in the ASUN, led by quarterback Parker McKinney (5,771 career passing yards) as a fourth-season starter, linebacker Matthew Jackson and cornerback Davion Ross (three pick-6s in 2021).

25 Elon

(6–5, 5–3 CAA)

The transfer to Elon of former NC State/Montana State quarterback Matthew McKay was an attention grabber for a lineup that returns veterans at the skill positions. Safeties Cole Coleman and Omar Rogers and defensive end Torrence Williams highlight the nine returning defensive starters.

FIVE MORE TO WATCH

FURMAN (6-5, 4-4 Southern); **HARVARD** (8-2, 5-2 Ivy); **MURRAY STATE** (6-5, 3-3 Ohio Valley); **NORTH DAKOTA** (5-6, 3-5 Missouri Valley); **RICHMOND** (6-5, 4-4 CAA)

2022 FBS SCHEDULES

ACC

BOSTON COLLEGE (6-6, 2-6)
Chestnut Hill, MA

Sept.	3	Rutgers
Sept.	10	at Virginia Tech
Sept.	17	Maine
Sept.	24	at Florida State
Oct.	1	Louisville
Oct.	8	Clemson
Oct.	22	at Wake Forest
Oct.	29	at Connecticut
Nov.	4	Duke
Nov.	12	at NC State
Nov.	19	at Notre Dame
Nov.	26	Syracuse

CLEMSON (10-3, 6-2)
Clemson, SC

Sept.	5	at Georgia Tech
Sept.	10	Furman
Sept.	17	Louisiana Tech
Sept.	24	at Wake Forest
Oct.	1	NC State
Oct.	8	at Boston College
Oct.	15	at Florida State
Oct.	22	Syracuse
Nov.	5	at Notre Dame
Nov.	12	Louisville
Nov.	19	Miami (Fla.)
Nov.	26	South Carolina

DUKE (3-9, 0-8)
Durham, NC

Sept.	2	Temple
Sept.	10	at Northwestern
Sept.	17	North Carolina A&T
Sept.	24	at Kansas
Oct.	1	Virginia
Oct.	8	at Georgia Tech
Oct.	15	North Carolina
Oct.	22	at Miami (Fla.)
Nov.	4	at Boston College
Nov.	12	Virginia Tech
Nov.	19	at Pittsburgh
Nov.	26	Wake Forest

FLORIDA STATE (5-7, 4-4)
Tallahassee, FL

Aug.	27	Duquesne
Sept.	4	vs. LSU #
Sept.	16	at Louisville
Sept.	24	Boston College
Oct.	1	Wake Forest
Oct.	8	at NC State
Oct.	15	Clemson
Oct.	29	Georgia Tech
Nov.	5	at Miami (Fla.)
Nov.	12	at Syracuse
Nov.	19	Louisiana
Nov.	25	Florida

#New Orleans

GEORGIA TECH (3-9, 2-6)
Atlanta, GA

Sept.	5	Clemson
Sept.	10	Western Carolina
Sept.	17	Ole Miss
Sept.	24	at UCF
Oct.	1	at Pittsburgh
Oct.	8	Duke
Oct.	20	Virginia
Oct.	29	at Florida State
Nov.	5	at Virginia Tech
Nov.	12	Miami (Fla.)
Nov.	19	at North Carolina
Nov.	26	at Georgia

LOUISVILLE (6-7, 4-4)
Louisville, KY

Sept.	3	at Syracuse
Sept.	9	at UCF
Sept.	16	Florida State
Sept.	24	USF
Oct.	1	at Boston College
Oct.	8	at Virginia
Oct.	22	Pittsburgh
Oct.	29	Wake Forest
Nov.	5	James Madison
Nov.	12	at Clemson
Nov.	19	NC State
Nov.	26	at Kentucky

MIAMI (7-5, 5-3)
Coral Gables, FL

Sept.	3	Bethune-Cookman
Sept.	10	Southern Miss
Sept.	17	at Texas A&M
Sept.	24	Middle Tennessee
Oct.	8	North Carolina
Oct.	15	at Virginia Tech
Oct.	22	Duke
Oct.	29	at Virginia
Nov.	5	Florida State
Nov.	12	at Georgia Tech
Nov.	19	at Clemson
Nov.	26	Pittsburgh

NORTH CAROLINA (6-7, 3-5)
Chapel Hill, NC

Aug.	27	Florida A&M
Sept.	3	at Appalachian State
Sept.	10	at Georgia State
Sept.	24	Notre Dame
Oct.	1	Virginia Tech
Oct.	8	at Miami (Fla.)
Oct.	15	at Duke
Oct.	29	Pittsburgh
Nov.	5	at Virginia
Nov.	12	at Wake Forest
Nov.	19	Georgia Tech
Nov.	25	NC State

NC STATE (9-3, 6-2)
Raleigh, NC

Sept.	3	at East Carolina
Sept.	10	Charleston Southern
Sept.	17	Texas Tech
Sept.	24	Connecticut
Oct.	1	at Clemson
Oct.	8	Florida State
Oct.	15	at Syracuse
Oct.	27	Virginia Tech
Nov.	5	Wake Forest
Nov.	12	Boston College
Nov.	19	at Louisville
Nov.	25	at North Carolina

PITTSBURGH (11-3, 7-1)
Pittsburgh, PA

Sept.	1	West Virginia
Sept.	10	Tennessee
Sept.	17	at Western Michigan
Sept.	24	Rhode Island
Oct.	1	Georgia Tech
Oct.	8	Virginia Tech
Oct.	22	at Louisville
Oct.	29	at North Carolina
Nov.	5	Syracuse
Nov.	12	at Virginia
Nov.	19	Duke
Nov.	26	at Miami (Fla.)

SYRACUSE (5-7, 2-6)
Syracuse, NY

Sept.	3	Louisville
Sept.	10	at Connecticut
Sept.	17	Purdue
Sept.	23	Virginia
Oct.	1	Wagner
Oct.	15	NC State
Oct.	22	at Clemson
Oct.	29	Notre Dame
Nov.	5	at Pittsburgh
Nov.	12	Florida State
Nov.	19	at Wake Forest
Nov.	26	at Boston College

VIRGINIA (6-6, 4-4)
Charlottesville, VA

Sept.	3	Richmond
Sept.	10	at Illinois
Sept.	17	Old Dominion
Sept.	23	at Syracuse
Oct.	1	at Duke
Oct.	8	Louisville
Oct.	20	at Georgia Tech
Oct.	29	Miami (Fla.)
Nov.	5	North Carolina
Nov.	12	Pittsburgh
Nov.	19	Coastal Carolina
Nov.	26	at Virginia Tech

EAST CAROLINA

East Carolina Athletics

VIRGINIA TECH (6-7, 4-4)
Blacksburg, VA

Sept.	2	at Old Dominion
Sept.	10	Boston College
Sept.	17	Wofford
Sept.	22	West Virginia
Oct.	1	at North Carolina
Oct.	8	at Pittsburgh
Oct.	15	Miami (Fla.)
Oct.	27	at NC State
Nov.	5	Georgia Tech
Nov.	12	at Duke
Nov.	19	at Liberty
Nov.	26	Virginia

WAKE FOREST (11-3, 7-1)
Winston-Salem, NC

Sept.	1	VMI
Sept.	10	at Vanderbilt
Sept.	17	Liberty
Sept.	24	Clemson
Oct.	1	at Florida State
Oct.	8	Army
Oct.	22	Boston College
Oct.	29	at Louisville
Nov.	5	at NC State
Nov.	12	North Carolina
Nov.	19	Syracuse
Nov.	26	at Duke

AMERICAN

CINCINNATI (13-1, 8-0)
Cincinnati, OH

Sept.	3	at Arkansas
Sept.	10	Kennesaw State
Sept.	17	vs. Miami (Ohio) #
Sept.	24	Indiana
Oct.	1	at Tulsa
Oct.	8	USF
Oct.	22	at SMU
Oct.	29	at UCF
Nov.	5	Navy
Nov.	11	East Carolina
Nov.	19	at Temple
Nov.	26	Tulane

#Paul Brown Stadium

EAST CAROLINA (7-5, 5-3)
Greenville, NC

Sept.	3	NC State
Sept.	10	Old Dominion
Sept.	17	Campbell
Sept.	24	Navy
Oct.	1	at USF
Oct.	8	at Tulane
Oct.	15	Memphis
Oct.	22	UCF
Oct.	28	at BYU
Nov.	11	at Cincinnati
Nov.	19	Houston
Nov.	26	at Temple

HOUSTON (12-2, 8-0)
Houston, TX

Sept.	3	at UTSA
Sept.	10	at Texas Tech
Sept.	17	Kansas
Sept.	24	Rice
Sept.	30	Tulane
Oct.	7	at Memphis
Oct.	22	at Navy
Oct.	29	USF
Nov.	5	at SMU
Nov.	12	Temple
Nov.	19	at East Carolina
Nov.	26	Tulsa

MEMPHIS (6-6, 3-5)
Memphis, TN

Sept.	3	at Mississippi State
Sept.	10	at Navy
Sept.	17	Arkansas State
Sept.	24	North Texas
Oct.	1	Temple
Oct.	7	Houston
Oct.	15	at East Carolina
Oct.	22	at Tulane
Nov.	5	UCF
Nov.	10	Tulsa
Nov.	19	North Alabama
Nov.	26	at SMU

NAVY (4-8, 3-5)

Annapolis, MD

Sept.	3	Delaware
Sept.	10	Memphis
Sept.	24	at East Carolina
Oct.	1	at Air Force
Oct.	8	Tulsa
Oct.	14	at SMU
Oct.	22	Houston
Oct.	29	Temple
Nov.	5	at Cincinnati
Nov.	12	vs. Notre Dame #
Nov.	19	at UCF
Dec.	10	vs. Army %

#Baltimore %Philadelphia

SMU (8-4, 4-4)

Dallas, TX

Sept.	3	at North Texas
Sept.	10	Lamar
Sept.	17	at Maryland
Sept.	24	TCU
Oct.	1	at UCF
Oct.	14	Navy
Oct.	22	Cincinnati
Oct.	29	at Tulsa
Nov.	5	Houston
Nov.	12	at USF
Nov.	17	at Tulane
Nov.	26	Memphis

TEMPLE (3-9, 1-7)

Philadelphia, PA

Sept.	2	at Duke
Sept.	10	Lafayette
Sept.	17	Rutgers
Sept.	24	UMass
Oct.	1	at Memphis
Oct.	13	at UCF
Oct.	21	Tulsa
Oct.	29	at Navy
Nov.	5	USF
Nov.	12	at Houston
Nov.	19	Cincinnati
Nov.	26	East Carolina

TULANE (2-10, 1-7)

New Orleans, LA

Sept.	3	UMass
Sept.	10	Alcorn State
Sept.	17	at Kansas State
Sept.	24	Southern Miss
Sept.	30	at Houston
Oct.	8	East Carolina
Oct.	15	at USF
Oct.	22	Memphis
Nov.	5	at Tulsa
Nov.	12	UCF
Nov.	17	SMU
Nov.	26	at Cincinnati

TULSA (7-6, 5-3)

Tulsa, OK

Sept.	3	at Wyoming
Sept.	10	Northern Illinois
Sept.	17	Jacksonville State
Sept.	24	at Ole Miss
Oct.	1	Cincinnati
Oct.	8	at Navy
Oct.	21	at Temple
Oct.	29	SMU
Nov.	5	Tulane
Nov.	10	at Memphis
Nov.	18	USF
Nov.	26	at Houston

UCF (9-4, 5-3)

Orlando, FL

Sept.	1	South Carolina State
Sept.	9	Louisville
Sept.	17	at Florida Atlantic
Sept.	24	Georgia Tech
Oct.	1	SMU
Oct.	13	Temple
Oct.	22	at East Carolina
Oct.	29	Cincinnati
Nov.	5	at Memphis
Nov.	12	at Tulane
Nov.	19	Navy
Nov.	26	at USF

UCF Athletics

USF (2-10, 1-7)

Tampa, FL

Sept.	3	BYU
Sept.	10	Howard
Sept.	17	at Florida
Sept.	24	at Louisville
Oct.	1	East Carolina
Oct.	8	at Cincinnati
Oct.	15	Tulane
Oct.	29	at Houston
Nov.	5	at Temple
Nov.	12	SMU
Nov.	18	at Tulsa
Nov.	25	UCF

BIG TEN

ILLINOIS (5-7, 4-5)

Champaign, IL

Aug.	27	Wyoming
Sept.	2	at Indiana
Sept.	10	Virginia
Sept.	24	Chattanooga
Oct.	1	at Wisconsin
Oct.	8	Iowa
Oct.	15	Minnesota
Oct.	29	at Nebraska
Nov.	5	Michigan State
Nov.	12	Purdue
Nov.	19	at Michigan
Nov.	26	at Northwestern

INDIANA (2-10, 0-9)

Bloomington, IN

Sept.	2	Illinois
Sept.	10	Idaho
Sept.	17	WKU
Sept.	24	at Cincinnati
Oct.	1	at Nebraska
Oct.	8	Michigan
Oct.	15	Maryland
Oct.	22	at Rutgers
Nov.	5	Penn State
Nov.	12	at Ohio State
Nov.	19	at Michigan State
Nov.	26	Purdue

IOWA (10-4, 7-2)

Iowa City, IA

Sept.	3	South Dakota State
Sept.	10	Iowa State
Sept.	17	Nevada
Sept.	24	at Rutgers
Oct.	1	Michigan
Oct.	8	at Illinois
Oct.	22	at Ohio State
Oct.	29	Northwestern
Nov.	5	at Purdue
Nov.	12	Wisconsin
Nov.	19	at Minnesota
Nov.	25	Nebraska

MARYLAND (7-6, 3-6)

College Park, MD

Sept.	3	Buffalo
Sept.	10	at Charlotte
Sept.	17	SMU
Sept.	24	at Michigan
Oct.	1	Michigan State
Oct.	8	Purdue
Oct.	15	at Indiana
Oct.	22	Northwestern
Nov.	5	at Wisconsin
Nov.	12	at Penn State
Nov.	19	Ohio State
Nov.	26	Rutgers

MICHIGAN (12-2, 8-1)

Ann Arbor, MI

Sept.	3	Colorado State
Sept.	10	Hawaii
Sept.	17	Connecticut
Sept.	24	Maryland
Oct.	1	at Iowa
Oct.	8	at Indiana
Oct.	15	Penn State
Oct.	29	Michigan State
Nov.	5	at Rutgers
Nov.	12	Nebraska
Nov.	19	Illinois
Nov.	26	at Ohio State

MICHIGAN STATE (11-2, 7-2)

East Lansing, MI

Sept.	2	Western Michigan
Sept.	10	Akron
Sept.	17	at Washington
Sept.	24	Minnesota
Oct.	1	at Maryland
Oct.	8	Ohio State
Oct.	15	Wisconsin
Oct.	29	at Michigan
Nov.	5	at Illinois
Nov.	12	Rutgers
Nov.	19	Indiana
Nov.	26	at Penn State

MINNESOTA (9-4, 6-3)

Minneapolis, MN

Sept.	1	New Mexico State
Sept.	10	Western Illinois
Sept.	17	Colorado
Sept.	24	at Michigan State
Oct.	1	Purdue
Oct.	15	at Illinois
Oct.	22	at Penn State
Oct.	29	Rutgers
Nov.	5	at Nebraska
Nov.	12	Northwestern
Nov.	19	Iowa
Nov.	26	at Wisconsin

NEBRASKA (3-9, 1-8)

Lincoln, NE

Aug.	27	vs. Northwestern #
Sept.	3	North Dakota
Sept.	10	Georgia Southern
Sept.	17	Oklahoma
Oct.	1	Indiana
Oct.	8	at Rutgers
Oct.	15	at Purdue
Oct.	29	Illinois
Nov.	5	Minnesota
Nov.	12	at Michigan
Nov.	19	Wisconsin
Nov.	25	at Iowa

#Dublin, Ireland

NORTHWESTERN (3-9, 1-8)

Evanston, IL

Aug.	27	vs. Nebraska #
Sept.	10	Duke
Sept.	17	Southern Illinois
Sept.	24	Miami (Ohio)
Oct.	1	at Penn State
Oct.	8	Wisconsin
Oct.	22	at Maryland
Oct.	29	at Iowa
Nov.	5	Ohio State
Nov.	12	at Minnesota
Nov.	19	at Purdue
Nov.	26	Illinois

#Dublin, Ireland

OHIO STATE (11-2, 8-1)

Columbus, OH

Sept.	3	Notre Dame
Sept.	10	Arkansas State
Sept.	17	Toledo
Sept.	24	Wisconsin
Oct.	1	Rutgers
Oct.	8	at Michigan State
Oct.	22	Iowa
Oct.	29	at Penn State
Nov.	5	at Northwestern
Nov.	12	Indiana
Nov.	19	at Maryland
Nov.	26	Michigan

PENN STATE (7-6, 4-5)

University Park, PA

Sept.	3	at Purdue
Sept.	10	Ohio
Sept.	17	at Auburn
Sept.	24	Central Michigan
Oct.	1	Northwestern
Oct.	15	at Michigan
Oct.	22	Minnesota
Oct.	29	Ohio State
Nov.	5	at Indiana
Nov.	12	Maryland
Nov.	19	at Rutgers
Nov.	26	Michigan State

PURDUE (9-4, 6-3)

West Lafayette, IN

Sept.	3	Penn State
Sept.	10	Indiana State
Sept.	17	at Syracuse
Sept.	24	Florida Atlantic
Oct.	1	at Minnesota
Oct.	8	at Maryland
Oct.	15	Nebraska
Oct.	22	at Wisconsin
Nov.	5	Iowa
Nov.	12	at Illinois
Nov.	19	Northwestern
Nov.	26	at Indiana

RUTGERS (5-8, 2-7)

New Brunswick, NJ

Sept.	3	at Boston College
Sept.	10	Wagner
Sept.	17	at Temple
Sept.	24	Iowa
Oct.	1	at Ohio State
Oct.	8	Nebraska
Oct.	22	Indiana
Oct.	29	at Minnesota
Nov.	5	Michigan
Nov.	12	at Michigan State
Nov.	19	Penn State
Nov.	26	at Maryland

WISCONSIN (9-4, 6-3)

Madison, WI

Sept.	3	Illinois State
Sept.	10	Washington State
Sept.	17	New Mexico State
Sept.	24	at Ohio State
Oct.	1	Illinois
Oct.	8	at Northwestern
Oct.	15	at Michigan State
Oct.	22	Purdue
Nov.	5	Maryland
Nov.	12	at Iowa
Nov.	19	at Nebraska
Nov.	26	Minnesota

BIG 12

BAYLOR (12-2, 7-2)
Waco, TX

Sept.	3	UAlbany
Sept.	10	at BYU
Sept.	17	Texas State
Sept.	24	at Iowa State
Oct.	1	Oklahoma State
Oct.	13	at West Virginia
Oct.	22	Kansas
Oct.	29	at Texas Tech
Nov.	5	at Oklahoma
Nov.	12	Kansas State
Nov.	19	TCU
Nov.	26	at Texas

IOWA STATE (7-6, 5-4)
Ames, IA

Sept.	3	Southeast Missouri
Sept.	10	at Iowa
Sept.	17	Ohio
Sept.	24	Baylor
Oct.	1	at Kansas
Oct.	8	Kansas State
Oct.	15	at Texas
Oct.	27	Oklahoma
Nov.	5	West Virginia
Nov.	12	at Oklahoma State
Nov.	19	Texas Tech
Nov.	26	at TCU

KANSAS (2-10, 1-8)
Lawrence, KS

Sept.	2	Tennessee Tech
Sept.	10	at West Virginia
Sept.	17	at Houston
Sept.	24	Duke
Oct.	1	Iowa State
Oct.	8	TCU
Oct.	15	at Oklahoma
Oct.	22	at Baylor
Nov.	5	Oklahoma State
Nov.	12	at Texas Tech
Nov.	19	Texas
Nov.	26	at Kansas State

KANSAS STATE (8-5, 4-5)
Manhattan, KS

Sept.	3	South Dakota
Sept.	10	Missouri
Sept.	17	Tulane
Sept.	24	at Oklahoma
Oct.	1	Texas Tech
Oct.	8	at Iowa State
Oct.	22	at TCU
Oct.	29	Oklahoma State
Nov.	5	Texas
Nov.	12	at Baylor
Nov.	19	at West Virginia
Nov.	26	Kansas

OKLAHOMA (11-2, 7-2)
Norman, OK

Sept.	3	UTEP
Sept.	10	Kent State
Sept.	17	at Nebraska
Sept.	24	Kansas State
Oct.	1	at TCU
Oct.	8	vs. Texas #
Oct.	15	Kansas
Oct.	27	at Iowa State
Nov.	5	Baylor
Nov.	12	at West Virginia
Nov.	19	Oklahoma State
Nov.	26	at Texas Tech

#Dallas

OKLAHOMA STATE (12-2, 8-1)
Stillwater, OK

Sept.	3	Central Michigan
Sept.	10	Arizona State
Sept.	17	Arkansas-Pine Bluff
Oct.	1	at Baylor
Oct.	8	Texas Tech
Oct.	15	at TCU
Oct.	22	Texas
Oct.	29	at Kansas State
Nov.	5	at Kansas
Nov.	12	Iowa State
Nov.	19	at Oklahoma
Nov.	26	West Virginia

TEXAS (5-7, 3-6)
Austin, TX

Sept.	3	ULM
Sept.	10	Alabama
Sept.	17	UTSA
Sept.	24	at Texas Tech
Oct.	1	West Virginia
Oct.	8	vs. Oklahoma #
Oct.	15	Iowa State
Oct.	22	at Oklahoma State
Nov.	5	at Kansas State
Nov.	12	TCU
Nov.	19	at Kansas
Nov.	26	Baylor

#Dallas, TX

TCU (5-7, 3-6)
Fort Worth, TX

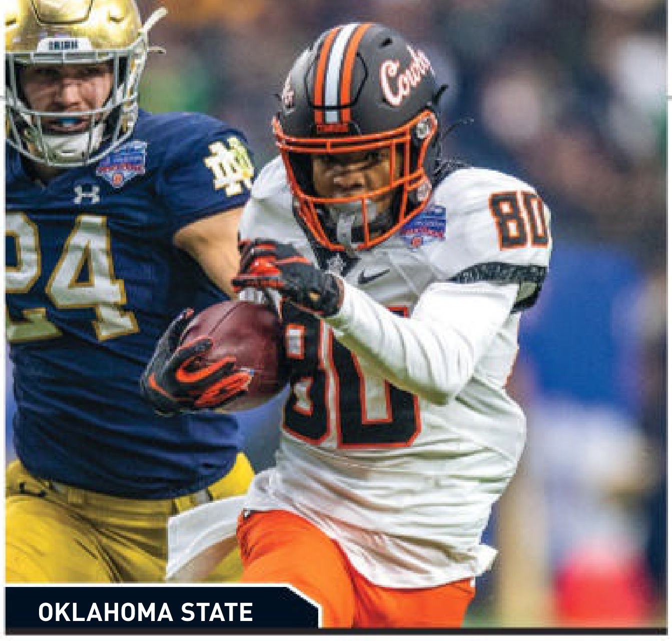
Sept.	3	at Colorado
Sept.	10	Tarleton
Sept.	24	at SMU
Oct.	1	Oklahoma
Oct.	8	at Kansas
Oct.	15	Oklahoma State
Oct.	22	Kansas State
Oct.	29	at West Virginia
Nov.	5	Texas Tech
Nov.	12	at Texas
Nov.	19	at Baylor
Nov.	26	Iowa State

TEXAS TECH (7-6, 3-6)
Lubbock, TX

Sept.	3	Murray State
Sept.	10	Houston
Sept.	17	at NC State
Sept.	24	Texas
Oct.	1	at Kansas State
Oct.	8	at Oklahoma State
Oct.	22	West Virginia
Oct.	29	Baylor
Nov.	5	at TCU
Nov.	12	Kansas
Nov.	19	at Iowa State
Nov.	26	Oklahoma

WEST VIRGINIA (6-7, 4-5)
Morgantown, WV

Sept.	1	at Pittsburgh
Sept.	10	Kansas
Sept.	17	Towson
Sept.	22	at Virginia Tech
Oct.	1	at Texas
Oct.	13	Baylor
Oct.	22	at Texas Tech
Oct.	29	TCU
Nov.	5	at Iowa State
Nov.	12	Oklahoma
Nov.	19	Kansas State
Nov.	26	at Oklahoma State


OKLAHOMA STATE

C-USA

CHARLOTTE (5-7, 3-5)
Charlotte, NC

Aug.	27	at Florida Atlantic
Sept.	1	William & Mary
Sept.	10	Maryland
Sept.	17	at Georgia State
Sept.	24	at South Carolina
Oct.	1	UTEP
Oct.	15	at UAB
Oct.	22	FIU
Oct.	29	at Rice
Nov.	5	WKU
Nov.	12	at Middle Tennessee
Nov.	19	Louisiana Tech

FLORIDA ATLANTIC (5-7, 3-5)
Boca Raton, FL

Aug.	27	Charlotte
Sept.	3	at Ohio
Sept.	10	SE Louisiana
Sept.	17	UCF
Sept.	24	at Purdue
Oct.	1	at North Texas
Oct.	15	Rice
Oct.	22	at UTEP
Oct.	29	UAB
Nov.	12	at FIU
Nov.	19	at Middle Tennessee
Nov.	26	WKU

FIU (1-11, 0-8)
Miami, FL

Sept.	1	Bryant
Sept.	9	at Texas State
Sept.	24	at WKU
Oct.	1	at New Mexico State
Oct.	8	Connecticut
Oct.	14	UTSA
Oct.	22	at Charlotte
Oct.	29	Louisiana Tech
Nov.	5	at North Texas
Nov.	12	Florida Atlantic
Nov.	19	at UTEP
Nov.	26	Middle Tennessee

LOUISIANA TECH (3-9, 2-6)
Ruston, LA

Sept.	1	at Missouri
Sept.	10	Stephen F. Austin
Sept.	17	at Clemson
Sept.	24	at South Alabama
Oct.	8	UTEP
Oct.	15	at North Texas
Oct.	22	Rice
Oct.	29	at FIU
Nov.	5	Middle Tennessee
Nov.	12	at UTSA
Nov.	19	at Charlotte
Nov.	26	UAB

MIDDLE TENNESSEE (7-6, 4-4)
Murfreesboro, TN

Sept.	3	at James Madison
Sept.	10	at Colorado State
Sept.	17	Tennessee State
Sept.	24	at Miami (Fla.)
Sept.	30	UTSA
Oct.	8	at UAB
Oct.	15	WKU
Oct.	29	at UTEP
Nov.	5	at Louisiana Tech
Nov.	12	Charlotte
Nov.	19	Florida Atlantic
Nov.	26	at FIU

NORTH TEXAS (6-7, 5-3)
Denton, TX

Aug.	27	at UTEP
Sept.	3	SMU
Sept.	10	Texas Southern
Sept.	17	at UNLV
Sept.	24	at Memphis
Oct.	1	Florida Atlantic
Oct.	15	Louisiana Tech
Oct.	22	at UTSA
Oct.	29	at WKU
Nov.	5	FIU
Nov.	12	at UAB
Nov.	26	Rice

RICE (4-8, 3-5)
Houston, TX

Sept.	3	at USC
Sept.	10	McNeese
Sept.	17	Louisiana
Sept.	24	at Houston
Oct.	1	UAB
Oct.	15	at Florida Atlantic
Oct.	22	at Louisiana Tech
Oct.	29	Charlotte
Nov.	5	UTEP
Nov.	12	at WKU
Nov.	19	UTSA
Nov.	26	at North Texas

UAB (9-4, 6-2)
Birmingham, AL

Sept.	1	Alabama A&M
Sept.	10	at Liberty
Sept.	17	Georgia Southern
Oct.	1	at Rice
Oct.	8	Middle Tennessee
Oct.	15	Charlotte
Oct.	21	at WKU
Oct.	29	at Florida Atlantic
Nov.	5	UTSA
Nov.	12	North Texas
Nov.	19	at LSU
Nov.	26	at Louisiana Tech

UTEP (7-6, 4-4)
El Paso, TX

Aug.	27	North Texas
Sept.	3	at Oklahoma
Sept.	10	New Mexico State
Sept.	17	at New Mexico
Sept.	23	Boise State
Oct.	1	at Charlotte
Oct.	8	at Louisiana Tech
Oct.	22	Florida Atlantic
Oct.	29	Middle Tennessee
Nov.	5	at Rice
Nov.	19	FIU
Nov.	26	at UTSA

UTSA (12-2, 7-1)
San Antonio, TX

Sept.	3	Houston
Sept.	10	at Army
Sept.	17	at Texas
Sept.	24	Texas Southern
Sept.	30	at Middle Tennessee
Oct.	8	WKU
Oct.	14	at FIU
Oct.	22	North Texas
Nov.	5	at UAB
Nov.	12	Louisiana Tech
Nov.	19	at Rice
Nov.	26	UTEP

WKU (9-5, 7-1)
Bowling Green, KY

Aug.	27	Austin Peay
Sept.	3	at Hawaii
Sept.	17	at Indiana
Sept.	24	FIU
Oct.	1	Troy
Oct.	8	at UTSA
Oct.	15	at Middle Tennessee
Oct.	21	UAB
Oct.	29	North Texas
Nov.	5	at Charlotte
Nov.	12	Rice
Nov.	19	at Auburn
Nov.	26	at Florida Atlantic

MAC

AKRON (2-10, 1-7)
Akron, OH

Sept.	1	St. Francis (Pa.)
Sept.	10	at Michigan State
Sept.	17	at Tennessee
Sept.	24	at Liberty
Oct.	1	Bowling Green
Oct.	8	at Ohio
Oct.	15	Central Michigan
Oct.	22	at Kent State
Oct.	29	Miami (Ohio)
Nov.	8	Eastern Michigan
Nov.	19	at Buffalo
Nov.	26	at Northern Illinois

BALL STATE (6-7, 4-4)
Muncie, IN

Sept.	1	at Tennessee
Sept.	10	Western Michigan
Sept.	17	Murray State
Sept.	24	at Georgia Southern
Oct.	1	Northern Illinois
Oct.	8	at Central Michigan
Oct.	15	Connecticut
Oct.	22	Eastern Michigan
Nov.	1	at Kent State
Nov.	8	at Toledo
Nov.	15	Ohio
Nov.	22	at Miami (Ohio)

Oklahoma State, San Diego State: Peter Brouillet

BOWLING GREEN (4-8, 2-6)
Bowling Green, OH

Sept.	3	at UCLA
Sept.	10	Eastern Kentucky
Sept.	17	Marshall
Sept.	24	at Mississippi State
Oct.	1	at Akron
Oct.	8	Buffalo
Oct.	15	Miami (Ohio)
Oct.	22	at Central Michigan
Nov.	2	Western Michigan
Nov.	9	Kent State
Nov.	15	at Toledo
Nov.	22	at Ohio

BUFFALO (4-8, 2-6)
Buffalo, NY

Sept.	3	at Maryland
Sept.	10	Holy Cross
Sept.	17	at Coastal Carolina
Sept.	24	at Eastern Michigan
Oct.	1	Miami (Ohio)
Oct.	8	at Bowling Green
Oct.	15	at UMass
Oct.	22	Toledo
Nov.	1	at Ohio
Nov.	9	at Central Michigan
Nov.	19	Akron
Nov.	26	Kent State

CENTRAL MICHIGAN (9-4, 6-2)
Mt. Pleasant, MI

Sept.	1	at Oklahoma State
Sept.	10	South Alabama
Sept.	17	Bucknell
Sept.	24	at Penn State
Oct.	1	at Toledo
Oct.	8	Ball State
Oct.	15	at Akron
Oct.	22	Bowling Green
Nov.	2	at Northern Illinois
Nov.	9	Buffalo
Nov.	16	Western Michigan
Nov.	25	at Eastern Michigan

EASTERN MICHIGAN (7-6, 4-4)
Ypsilanti, MI

Sept.	2	Eastern Kentucky
Sept.	10	at Louisiana
Sept.	17	at Arizona State
Sept.	24	Buffalo
Oct.	1	UMass
Oct.	8	at Western Michigan
Oct.	15	Northern Illinois
Oct.	22	at Ball State
Oct.	29	Toledo
Nov.	8	at Akron
Nov.	16	at Kent State
Nov.	25	Central Michigan

KENT STATE (7-7, 6-2)
Kent, OH

Sept.	3	at Washington
Sept.	10	at Oklahoma
Sept.	17	LIU
Sept.	24	at Georgia
Oct.	1	Ohio
Oct.	8	at Miami (Ohio)
Oct.	15	at Toledo
Oct.	22	Akron
Nov.	1	Ball State
Nov.	9	at Bowling Green
Nov.	16	Eastern Michigan
Nov.	26	at Buffalo

MIAMI (OHIO) (7-6, 5-3)
Oxford, OH

Sept.	3	at Kentucky
Sept.	10	Robert Morris
Sept.	17	vs. Cincinnati #
Sept.	24	at Northwestern
Oct.	1	at Buffalo
Oct.	8	Kent State
Oct.	15	at Bowling Green
Oct.	22	Western Michigan
Oct.	29	at Akron
Nov.	8	Ohio
Nov.	16	at Northern Illinois
Nov.	22	Ball State

#Paul Brown Stadium

NORTHERN ILLINOIS (9-5, 6-2)
Dekalb, IL

Sept.	3	Eastern Illinois
Sept.	10	at Tulsa
Sept.	17	Vanderbilt
Sept.	24	at Kentucky
Oct.	1	at Ball State
Oct.	8	Toledo
Oct.	15	at Eastern Michigan
Oct.	22	at Ohio
Nov.	2	Central Michigan
Nov.	9	at Western Michigan
Nov.	16	Miami (Ohio)
Nov.	26	Akron

OHIO (3-9, 3-5)
Athens, OH

Sept.	3	Florida Atlantic
Sept.	10	at Penn State
Sept.	17	at Iowa State
Sept.	24	Fordham
Oct.	1	at Kent State
Oct.	8	Akron
Oct.	15	at Western Michigan
Oct.	22	Northern Illinois
Nov.	1	Buffalo
Nov.	8	at Miami (Ohio)
Nov.	15	at Ball State
Nov.	22	Bowling Green

TOLEDO (7-6, 5-3)
Toledo, OH

Sept.	3	LIU
Sept.	10	UMass
Sept.	17	at Ohio State
Sept.	24	at San Diego State
Oct.	1	Central Michigan
Oct.	8	at Northern Illinois
Oct.	15	Kent State
Oct.	22	at Buffalo
Oct.	29	at Eastern Michigan
Nov.	8	Ball State
Nov.	15	Bowling Green
Nov.	25	at Western Michigan

WESTERN MICHIGAN (8-5, 4-4)
Kalamazoo, MI

Sept.	2	at Michigan State
Sept.	10	at Ball State
Sept.	17	Pittsburgh
Sept.	24	at San Jose State
Oct.	1	New Hampshire
Oct.	8	Eastern Michigan
Oct.	15	Ohio
Oct.	22	at Miami (Ohio)
Nov.	2	at Bowling Green
Nov.	9	Northern Illinois
Nov.	16	at Central Michigan
Nov.	25	Toledo

New Mexico Athletics

MOUNTAIN WEST

AIR FORCE (10-3, 6-2)
Colorado Springs, CO

Sept.	3	Northern Iowa
Sept.	10	Colorado
Sept.	17	at Wyoming
Sept.	24	Nevada
Oct.	1	Navy
Oct.	8	at Utah State
Oct.	15	at UNLV
Oct.	22	Boise State
Nov.	5	vs. Army #
Nov.	12	New Mexico
Nov.	19	Colorado State
Nov.	26	at San Diego State

#Arlington, TX

BOISE STATE (7-5, 5-3)
Boise, ID

Sept.	3	at Oregon State
Sept.	10	at New Mexico
Sept.	17	Tennessee-Martin
Sept.	23	at UTEP
Oct.	1	San Diego State
Oct.	8	Fresno State
Oct.	22	at Air Force
Oct.	29	Colorado State
Nov.	5	BYU
Nov.	12	at Nevada
Nov.	19	at Wyoming
Nov.	26	Utah State

COLORADO STATE (3-9, 2-6)
Fort Collins, CO

Sept.	3	at Michigan
Sept.	10	Middle Tennessee
Sept.	17	at Washington State
Sept.	24	Sacramento State
Oct.	8	at Nevada
Oct.	15	Utah State
Oct.	22	Hawaii
Oct.	29	at Boise State
Nov.	5	at San Jose State
Nov.	12	Wyoming
Nov.	19	at Air Force
Nov.	26	New Mexico

SAN DIEGO STATE

FRESNO STATE (10-3, 6-2)
Fresno, CA

Sept.	3	Cal Poly
Sept.	10	Oregon State
Sept.	17	at USC
Oct.	1	at Connecticut
Oct.	8	at Boise State
Oct.	15	San Jose State
Oct.	22	at New Mexico
Oct.	29	San Diego State
Nov.	5	Hawaii
Nov.	12	at UNLV
Nov.	19	at Nevada
Nov.	26	Wyoming

HAWAII (6-7, 3-5)
Honolulu, HI

Aug.	27	Vanderbilt
Sept.	3	WKU
Sept.	10	at Michigan
Sept.	17	Duquesne
Sept.	24	at New Mexico State
Oct.	8	at San Diego State
Oct.	15	Nevada
Oct.	22	at Colorado State
Oct.	29	Wyoming
Nov.	5	at Fresno State
Nov.	12	Utah State
Nov.	19	UNLV
Nov.	26	at San Jose State

NEVADA (8-5, 5-3)
Reno, NV

Aug.	27	at New Mexico State
Sept.	3	Texas State
Sept.	10	Incarnate Word
Sept.	17	at Iowa
Sept.	24	at Air Force
Oct.	8	Colorado State
Oct.	15	at Hawaii
Oct.	22	San Diego State
Oct.	29	at San Jose State
Nov.	12	Boise State
Nov.	19	Fresno State
Nov.	26	at UNLV

NEW MEXICO (3-9, 1-7)
Albuquerque, NM

Sept.	3	Maine
Sept.	10	Boise State
Sept.	17	UTEP
Sept.	24	at LSU
Oct.	1	at UNLV
Oct.	8	Wyoming
Oct.	15	at New Mexico State
Oct.	22	Fresno State
Nov.	5	at Utah State
Nov.	12	at Air Force
Nov.	19	San Diego State
Nov.	26	at Colorado State

SAN DIEGO STATE (12-2, 7-2)
San Diego, CA

Sept.	3	Arizona
Sept.	10	Idaho State
Sept.	17	at Utah
Sept.	24	Toledo
Oct.	1	at Boise State
Oct.	8	Hawaii
Oct.	22	at Nevada
Oct.	29	at Fresno State
Nov.	5	UNLV
Nov.	12	San Jose State
Nov.	19	at New Mexico
Nov.	26	Air Force

SAN JOSE STATE (5-7, 3-5)
San Jose, CA

Sept.	3	Portland State
Sept.	10	at Auburn
Sept.	24	Western Michigan
Oct.	1	at Wyoming
Oct.	8	UNLV
Oct.	15	at Fresno State
Oct.	22	at New Mexico State
Oct.	29	Nevada
Nov.	5	Colorado State
Nov.	12	at San Diego State
Nov.	19	at Utah State
Nov.	26	Hawaii

UNLV (2-10, 2-6)
Las Vegas, NV

Sept.	3	Idaho State
Sept.	10	at California
Sept.	17	North Texas
Sept.	24	at Utah State
Oct.	1	New Mexico
Oct.	8	at San Jose State
Oct.	15	Air Force
Oct.	22	at Notre Dame
Nov.	5	at San Diego State
Nov.	12	Fresno State
Nov.	19	at Hawaii
Nov.	26	Nevada

UTAH STATE (11-3, 7-2)
Logan, UT

Aug.	27	Connecticut
Sept.	3	at Alabama
Sept.	10	Weber State
Sept.	24	UNLV
Sept.	29	at BYU
Oct.	8	Air Force
Oct.	15	at Colorado State
Oct.	22	at Wyoming
Nov.	5	New Mexico
Nov.	12	at Hawaii
Nov.	19	San Jose State
Nov.	26	at Boise State

WYOMING (7-6, 2-6)
Laramie, WY

Aug.	27	at Illinois
Sept.	3	Tulsa
Sept.	10	Northern Colorado
Sept.	17	Air Force
Sept.	24	at BYU
Oct.	1	San Jose State
Oct.	8	at New Mexico
Oct.	22	Utah State
Oct.	29	at Hawaii
Nov.	12	at Colorado State
Nov.	19	Boise State
Nov.	26	at Fresno State

PAC-12

ARIZONA (1-11, 1-8)
Tucson, AZ

Sept.	3	at San Diego State
Sept.	10	Mississippi State
Sept.	17	North Dakota State
Sept.	24	at California
Oct.	1	Colorado
Oct.	8	Oregon
Oct.	15	at Washington
Oct.	29	USC
Nov.	5	at Utah
Nov.	12	at UCLA
Nov.	19	Washington State
Nov.	25	Arizona State

ARIZONA STATE (8-5, 6-3)
Tempe, AZ

Sept.	1	Northern Arizona
Sept.	10	at Oklahoma State
Sept.	17	Eastern Michigan
Sept.	24	Utah
Oct.	1	at USC
Oct.	8	Washington
Oct.	22	at Stanford
Oct.	29	at Colorado
Nov.	5	UCLA
Nov.	12	at Washington State
Nov.	19	Oregon State
Nov.	25	at Arizona

CALIFORNIA (5-7, 4-5)
Berkeley, CA

Sept.	3	UC Davis
Sept.	10	UNLV
Sept.	17	at Notre Dame
Sept.	24	Arizona
Oct.	1	at Washington State
Oct.	15	at Colorado
Oct.	22	Washington
Oct.	29	Oregon
Nov.	5	at USC
Nov.	12	at Oregon State
Nov.	19	Stanford
Nov.	25	UCLA

COLORADO (4-8, 3-6)
Boulder, CO

Sept.	2	TCU
Sept.	10	at Air Force
Sept.	17	at Minnesota
Sept.	24	UCLA
Oct.	1	at Arizona
Oct.	15	California
Oct.	22	at Oregon State
Oct.	29	Arizona State
Nov.	5	Oregon
Nov.	11	at USC
Nov.	19	at Washington
Nov.	26	Utah

OREGON (10-4, 7-3)
Eugene, OR

Sept.	3	vs. Georgia #
Sept.	10	Eastern Washington
Sept.	17	BYU
Sept.	24	at Washington State
Oct.	1	Stanford
Oct.	8	at Arizona
Oct.	22	UCLA
Oct.	29	at California
Nov.	5	at Colorado
Nov.	12	Washington
Nov.	19	Utah
Nov.	25	at Oregon State

#Atlanta

OREGON STATE (7-6, 5-4)
Corvallis, OR

Sept.	3	Boise State
Sept.	10	at Fresno State
Sept.	17	vs. Montana State #
Sept.	24	USC
Oct.	1	at Utah
Oct.	8	at Stanford
Oct.	15	Washington State
Oct.	22	Colorado
Nov.	4	at Washington
Nov.	12	California
Nov.	19	at Arizona State
Nov.	25	Oregon

#Portland, OR

STANFORD (3-9, 2-7)
Stanford, CA

Sept.	3	Colgate
Sept.	10	USC
Sept.	24	at Washington
Oct.	1	at Oregon
Oct.	8	Oregon State
Oct.	15	at Notre Dame
Oct.	22	Arizona State
Oct.	29	at UCLA
Nov.	5	Washington State
Nov.	12	at Utah
Nov.	19	at California
Nov.	26	BYU

UCLA (8-4, 6-3)
Los Angeles, CA

Sept.	3	Bowling Green
Sept.	10	Alabama State
Sept.	17	South Alabama
Sept.	24	at Colorado
Sept.	30	Washington
Oct.	8	Utah
Oct.	22	at Oregon
Oct.	29	Stanford
Nov.	5	at Arizona State
Nov.	12	Arizona
Nov.	19	USC
Nov.	25	at California

USC (4-8, 3-6)
Los Angeles, CA

Sept.	3	Rice
Sept.	10	at Stanford
Sept.	17	Fresno State
Sept.	24	at Oregon State
Oct.	1	Arizona State
Oct.	8	Washington State
Oct.	15	at Utah
Oct.	29	at Arizona
Nov.	5	California
Nov.	11	Colorado
Nov.	19	at UCLA
Nov.	26	Notre Dame

UTAH (10-4, 9-1)
Salt Lake City, UT

Sept.	3	at Florida
Sept.	10	Southern Utah
Sept.	17	San Diego State
Sept.	24	at Arizona State
Oct.	1	Oregon State
Oct.	8	at UCLA
Oct.	15	USC
Oct.	27	at Washington State
Nov.	5	Arizona
Nov.	12	Stanford
Nov.	19	at Oregon
Nov.	26	at Colorado

WASHINGTON (4-8, 3-6)
Seattle, WA

Sept.	3	Kent State
Sept.	10	Portland State
Sept.	17	Michigan State
Sept.	24	Stanford
Sept.	30	at UCLA
Oct.	8	at Arizona State
Oct.	15	Arizona
Oct.	22	at California
Nov.	4	Oregon State
Nov.	12	at Oregon
Nov.	19	Colorado
Nov.	26	at Washington State

WASHINGTON STATE (7-6, 6-3)
Pullman, WA

Sept.	3	Idaho
Sept.	10	at Wisconsin
Sept.	17	Colorado State
Sept.	24	Oregon
Oct.	1	California
Oct.	8	at USC
Oct.	15	at Oregon State
Oct.	27	Utah
Nov.	5	at Stanford
Nov.	12	Arizona State
Nov.	19	at Arizona
Nov.	26	Washington

SEC

ALABAMA (13-2, 7-1)
Tuscaloosa, AL

Sept.	3	Utah State
Sept.	10	at Texas
Sept.	17	ULM
Sept.	24	Vanderbilt
Oct.	1	at Arkansas
Oct.	8	Texas A&M
Oct.	15	at Tennessee
Oct.	22	Mississippi State
Nov.	5	at LSU
Nov.	12	at Ole Miss
Nov.	19	Austin Peay
Nov.	26	Auburn

ARKANSAS (9-4, 4-4)
Fayetteville, AR

Sept.	3	Cincinnati
Sept.	10	South Carolina
Sept.	17	Missouri State
Sept.	24	vs. Texas A&M #
Oct.	1	Alabama
Oct.	8	at Mississippi State
Oct.	15	at BYU
Oct.	29	at Auburn
Nov.	5	Liberty
Nov.	12	LSU
Nov.	19	Ole Miss
Nov.	26	at Missouri

#Arlington, TX

AUBURN (6-7, 3-5)
Auburn, AL

Sept.	3	Mercer
Sept.	10	San Jose State
Sept.	17	Penn State
Sept.	24	Missouri
Oct.	1	LSU
Oct.	8	at Georgia
Oct.	15	at Ole Miss
Oct.	29	Arkansas
Nov.	5	at Mississippi State
Nov.	12	Texas A&M
Nov.	19	WKU
Nov.	26	at Alabama

FLORIDA (6-7, 2-6)
Gainesville, FL

Sept.	3	Utah
Sept.	10	Kentucky
Sept.	17	USF
Sept.	24	at Tennessee
Oct.	1	Eastern Washington
Oct.	8	Missouri
Oct.	15	LSU
Oct.	29	vs. Georgia #
Nov.	5	at Texas A&M
Nov.	12	South Carolina
Nov.	19	at Vanderbilt
Nov.	25	at Florida State

#Jacksonville, FL

GEORGIA (14-1, 8-0)
Athens, GA

Sept.	3	vs. Oregon #
Sept.	10	Samford
Sept.	17	at South Carolina
Sept.	24	Kent State
Oct.	1	at Missouri
Oct.	8	Auburn
Oct.	15	Vanderbilt
Oct.	29	vs. Florida %
Nov.	5	Tennessee
Nov.	12	at Mississippi State
Nov.	19	at Kentucky
Nov.	26	Georgia Tech

#Atlanta %Jacksonville, FL

KENTUCKY (10-3, 5-3)
Lexington, KY

Sept.	3	Miami (Ohio)
Sept.	10	at Florida
Sept.	17	Youngstown State
Sept.	24	Northern Illinois
Oct.	1	at Ole Miss
Oct.	8	South Carolina
Oct.	15	Mississippi State
Oct.	29	at Tennessee
Nov.	5	at Missouri
Nov.	12	Vanderbilt
Nov.	19	Georgia
Nov.	26	Louisville

LSU (6-7, 3-5)
Baton Rouge, LA

Sept.	4	vs. Florida State #
Sept.	10	Southern
Sept.	17	Mississippi State
Sept.	24	New Mexico
Oct.	1	at Auburn
Oct.	8	Tennessee
Oct.	15	at Florida
Oct.	22	Ole Miss
Nov.	5	Alabama
Nov.	12	at Arkansas
Nov.	19	UAB
Nov.	26	at Texas A&M

#New Orleans

MISSISSIPPI STATE (7-6, 4-4)
Starkville, MS

Sept.	3	Memphis
Sept.	10	at Arizona
Sept.	17	at LSU
Sept.	24	Bowling Green
Oct.	1	Texas A&M
Oct.	8	Arkansas
Oct.	15	at Kentucky
Oct.	22	at Alabama
Nov.	5	Auburn
Nov.	12	Georgia
Nov.	19	ETSU
Nov.	24	at Ole Miss

FLORIDA

MISSOURI (6-7, 3-5)
Columbia, MO

Sept.	1	Louisiana Tech
Sept.	10	at Kansas State
Sept.	17	Abilene Christian
Sept.	24	at Auburn
Oct.	1	Georgia
Oct.	8	at Florida
Oct.	22	Vanderbilt
Oct.	29	at South Carolina
Nov.	5	Kentucky
Nov.	12	at Tennessee
Nov.	19	New Mexico State
Nov.	26	Arkansas

OLE MISS (10-3, 6-2)
Oxford, MS

Sept.	3	Troy
Sept.	10	Central Arkansas
Sept.	17	at Georgia Tech
Sept.	24	Tulsa
Oct.	1	Kentucky
Oct.	8	at Vanderbilt
Oct.	15	Auburn
Oct.	22	at LSU
Oct.	29	at Texas A&M
Nov.	12	Alabama
Nov.	19	at Arkansas
Nov.	24	Mississippi State

SOUTH CAROLINA (7-6, 3-5)
Columbia, SC

Sept.	3	Georgia State
Sept.	10	at Arkansas
Sept.	17	Georgia
Sept.	24	Charlotte
Oct.	1	South Carolina State
Oct.	8	at Kentucky
Oct.	22	Texas A&M
Oct.	29	Missouri
Nov.	5	at Vanderbilt
Nov.	12	at Florida
Nov.	19	Tennessee
Nov.	26	at Clemson

TENNESSEE (7-6, 4-4)
Knoxville, TN

Sept.	1	Ball State
Sept.	10	at Pittsburgh
Sept.	17	Akron
Sept.	24	Florida
Oct.	8	at LSU
Oct.	15	Alabama
Oct.	22	Tennessee-Martin
Oct.	29	Kentucky
Nov.	5	at Georgia
Nov.	12	Missouri
Nov.	19	at South Carolina
Nov.	26	at Vanderbilt

Tom DiPace

TEXAS A&M (8-4, 4-4)
College Station, TX

Sept.	3	Sam Houston
Sept.	10	Appalachian State
Sept.	17	Miami (Fla.)
Sept.	24	vs. Arkansas #
Oct.	1	at Mississippi State
Oct.	8	at Alabama
Oct.	22	at South Carolina
Oct.	29	Ole Miss
Nov.	5	Florida
Nov.	12	at Auburn
Nov.	19	UMass
Nov.	26	LSU

#Arlington, TX

VANDERBILT (2-10, 0-8)
Nashville, TN

Aug.	27	at Hawaii
Sept.	3	Elon
Sept.	10	Wake Forest
Sept.	17	at Northern Illinois
Sept.	24	at Alabama
Oct.	8	Ole Miss
Oct.	15	at Georgia
Oct.	22	at Missouri
Nov.	5	South Carolina
Nov.	12	at Kentucky
Nov.	19	Florida
Nov.	26	Tennessee

SUN BELT

APPALACHIAN STATE (10-4, 7-2)
Boone, NC

Sept.	3	North Carolina
Sept.	10	at Texas A&M
Sept.	17	Troy
Sept.	24	James Madison
Oct.	1	The Citadel
Oct.	8	at Texas State
Oct.	19	Georgia State
Oct.	29	Robert Morris
Nov.	3	at Coastal Carolina
Nov.	12	at Marshall
Nov.	19	Old Dominion
Nov.	26	at Georgia Southern

ARKANSAS STATE (2-10, 1-7)
Jonesboro, AR

Sept.	3	Grambling State
Sept.	10	at Ohio State
Sept.	17	at Memphis
Sept.	24	at Old Dominion
Oct.	1	ULM
Oct.	8	James Madison
Oct.	15	at Southern Miss
Oct.	22	at Louisiana
Oct.	29	South Alabama
Nov.	12	UMass
Nov.	19	at Texas State
Nov.	26	Troy

COASTAL CAROLINA (11-2, 6-2)
Conway, SC

Sept.	3	Army
Sept.	10	Gardner-Webb
Sept.	17	Buffalo
Sept.	22	at Georgia State
Oct.	1	Georgia Southern
Oct.	8	at ULM
Oct.	15	Old Dominion
Oct.	29	at Marshall
Nov.	3	Appalachian State
Nov.	12	Southern Miss
Nov.	19	at Virginia
Nov.	26	at James Madison

GEORGIA SOUTHERN (3-9, 2-6)
Statesboro, GA

Sept.	3	Morgan State
Sept.	10	at Nebraska
Sept.	17	at UAB
Sept.	24	Ball State
Oct.	1	at Coastal Carolina
Oct.	8	at Georgia State
Oct.	15	James Madison
Oct.	22	at Old Dominion
Nov.	5	South Alabama
Nov.	10	at Louisiana
Nov.	19	Marshall
Nov.	26	Appalachian State

GEORGIA STATE (8-5, 6-2)
Atlanta, GA

Sept.	3	at South Carolina
Sept.	10	UNC
Sept.	17	Charlotte
Sept.	22	Coastal Carolina
Oct.	1	at Army
Oct.	8	Georgia Southern
Oct.	19	at Appalachian State
Oct.	29	Old Dominion
Nov.	5	at Southern Miss
Nov.	12	ULM
Nov.	19	at James Madison
Nov.	26	at Marshall

JAMES MADISON (12-2, 7-1 CAA)
Harrisonburg, VA

Sept.	3	Middle Tennessee
Sept.	10	Norfolk State
Sept.	24	at Appalachian State
Oct.	1	Texas State
Oct.	8	at Arkansas State
Oct.	15	at Georgia Southern
Oct.	22	Marshall
Nov.	5	at Louisville
Nov.	12	at Old Dominion
Nov.	19	Georgia State
Nov.	26	Coastal Carolina

LOUISIANA (13-1, 9-0)
Lafayette, LA

Sept.	3	SE Louisiana
Sept.	10	Eastern Michigan
Sept.	17	at Rice
Sept.	24	at ULM
Oct.	1	South Alabama
Oct.	12	at Marshall
Oct.	22	Arkansas State
Oct.	27	at Southern Miss
Nov.	5	Troy
Nov.	10	Georgia Southern
Nov.	19	at Florida State
Nov.	26	at Texas State

MARSHALL (7-6, 5-3 C-USA)
Huntington, WV

Sept.	3	Norfolk State
Sept.	10	at Notre Dame
Sept.	17	at Bowling Green
Sept.	24	at Troy
Oct.	1	Gardner-Webb
Oct.	12	Louisiana
Oct.	22	at James Madison
Oct.	29	Coastal Carolina
Nov.	5	at Old Dominion
Nov.	12	Appalachian State
Nov.	19	at Georgia Southern
Nov.	26	Georgia State

OLD DOMINION (6-7, 5-3 C-USA)
Norfolk, VA

Sept.	2	Virginia Tech
Sept.	10	at East Carolina
Sept.	17	at Virginia
Sept.	24	Arkansas State
Oct.	1	Liberty
Oct.	15	at Coastal Carolina
Oct.	22	Georgia Southern
Oct.	29	at Georgia State
Nov.	5	Marshall
Nov.	12	James Madison
Nov.	19	at Appalachian State
Nov.	26	at South Alabama

SOUTH ALABAMA (5-7, 2-6)
Mobile, AL

Sept.	3	Nicholls
Sept.	10	at Central Michigan
Sept.	17	at UCLA
Sept.	24	Louisiana Tech
Oct.	1	at Louisiana
Oct.	15	ULM
Oct.	20	Troy
Oct.	29	at Arkansas State
Nov.	5	at Georgia Southern
Nov.	12	Texas State
Nov.	19	at Southern Miss
Nov.	26	Old Dominion

SOUTHERN MISS (3-9, 2-6 C-USA)
Hattiesburg, MS

Sept.	3	Liberty
Sept.	10	at Miami (Fla.)
Sept.	17	Northwestern State
Sept.	24	at Tulane
Oct.	8	at Troy
Oct.	15	Arkansas State
Oct.	22	at Texas State
Oct.	27	Louisiana
Nov.	5	Georgia State
Nov.	12	at Coastal Carolina
Nov.	19	South Alabama
Nov.	26	at ULM

TEXAS STATE (4-8, 3-5)
San Marcos, TX

Sept.	3	at Nevada
Sept.	9	FIU
Sept.	17	at Baylor
Sept.	24	Houston Baptist
Oct.	1	at James Madison
Oct.	8	Appalachian State
Oct.	15	at Troy
Oct.	22	Southern Miss
Nov.	5	at ULM
Nov.	12	at South Alabama
Nov.	19	Arkansas State
Nov.	26	Louisiana

TROY (5-7, 3-5)
Troy, AL

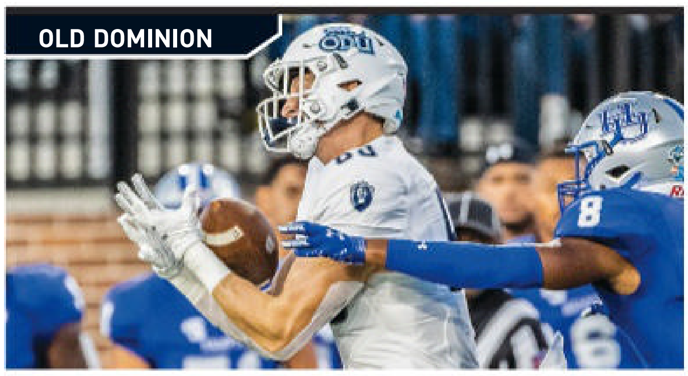
Sept.	3	at Ole Miss
Sept.	10	Alabama A&M
Sept.	17	at Appalachian State
Sept.	24	Marshall
Oct.	1	at WKU
Oct.	8	Southern Miss
Oct.	15	Texas State
Oct.	20	at South Alabama
Nov.	5	at Louisiana
Nov.	12	Army
Nov.	19	ULM
Nov.	26	at Arkansas State

ULM (4-8, 2-6)
Monroe, LA

Sept.	3	at Texas
Sept.	10	Nicholls
Sept.	17	at Alabama
Sept.	24	Louisiana
Oct.	1	at Arkansas State
Oct.	8	Coastal Carolina
Oct.	15	at South Alabama
Oct.	22	at Army
Nov.	5	Texas State
Nov.	12	at Georgia State
Nov.	19	at Troy
Nov.	26	Southern Miss

LIBERTY (8-5)
Lynchburg, VA

Sept.	3	at Southern Miss
Sept.	10	UAB
Sept.	17	at Wake Forest
Sept.	24	Akron
Oct.	1	at Old Dominion
Oct.	8	at UMass
Oct.	15	Gardner-Webb
Oct.	22	BYU
Nov.	5	at Arkansas
Nov.	12	at Connecticut
Nov.	19	Virginia Tech
Nov.	26	New Mexico State



Old Dominion Athletics

INDEPENDENTS

ARMY (9-4)
West Point, NY

Sept.	3	at Coastal Carolina
Sept.	10	UTSA
Sept.	17	Villanova
Oct.	1	Georgia State
Oct.	8	at Wake Forest
Oct.	15	Colgate
Oct.	22	ULM
Nov.	5	vs. Air Force #
Nov.	12	at Troy
Nov.	19	UConn
Nov.	26	at UMass
Dec.	10	vs. Navy %

#Arlington, TX %Philadelphia

BYU (10-3)
Provo, UT

Sept.	3	at USF
Sept.	10	Baylor
Sept.	17	at Oregon
Sept.	24	Wyoming
Sept.	29	Utah State
Oct.	8	vs. Notre Dame #
Oct.	15	Arkansas
Oct.	22	at Liberty
Oct.	28	East Carolina
Nov.	5	at Boise State
Nov.	19	Utah Tech
Nov.	26	at Stanford

#Las Vegas

CONNECTICUT (1-11)
Storrs, CT

Aug.	27	at Utah State
Sept.	3	Central Connecticut
Sept.	10	Syracuse
Sept.	17	at Michigan
Sept.	24	at NC State
Oct.	1	Fresno State
Oct.	8	at FIU
Oct.	15	at Ball State
Oct.	29	Boston College
Nov.	5	UMass
Nov.	12	Liberty
Nov.	19	at Army

NEW MEXICO STATE (2-10)
Las Cruces, NM

Aug.	27	Nevada
Sept.	1	at Minnesota
Sept.	10	at UTEP
Sept.	17	at Wisconsin
Sept.	24	Hawaii
Oct.	1	FIU
Oct.	15	New Mexico
Oct.	22	San Jose State
Oct.	29	at UMass
Nov.	12	Lamar
Nov.	19	at Missouri
Nov.	26	at Liberty

NOTRE DAME (11-2)
South Bend, IN

Sept.	3	at Ohio State
Sept.	10	Marshall
Sept.	17	California
Sept.	24	at North Carolina
Oct.	8	vs. BYU #
Oct.	15	Stanford
Oct.	22	UNLV
Oct.	29	at Syracuse
Nov.	5	Clemson
Nov.	12	vs. Navy %
Nov.	19	Boston College
Nov.	26	at USC

#Las Vegas %Baltimore

UMASS (1-11)
Amherst, MA

Sept.	3	at Tulane
Sept.	10	at Toledo
Sept.	17	Stony Brook
Sept.	24	at Temple
Oct.	1	at Eastern Michigan
Oct.	8	Liberty
Oct.	15	Buffalo
Oct.	29	New Mexico State
Nov.	5	at Connecticut
Nov.	12	at Arkansas State
Nov.	19	at Texas A&M
Nov.	26	Army

2022 RECRUITING

TOP 300 SIGNEES

NAME	SCHOOL (HOMETOWN)	POS	HT	WT	SCHOOL
1. Travis Hunter	Collins Hill (Suwanee, GA)	CB	6-1	165	Jackson State
2. Walter Nolen	Powell (Powell, TN)	DL	6-4	325	Texas A&M
3. Luther Burden III	East St. Louis (East St. Louis, IL)	WR	6-0	200	Missouri
4. Mykel Williams	Hardaway (Columbus, GA)	DL	6-5	265	Georgia
5. Domani Jackson	Mater Dei (Santa Ana, CA)	CB	6-1	185	USC
6. Cade Klubnik	Westlake (Austin, TX)	QB	6-3	186	Clemson
7. C.J. Hicks	Archbishop Alter (Dayton, OH)	LB	6-3	215	Ohio State
8. Harold Perkins	Cy Park (Cypress, TX)	LB	6-3	210	LSU
9. Shemar Stewart	Monsignor Pace (Opa Locka, FL)	DL	6-6	272	Texas A&M
10. Devon Campbell	Bowie (Arlington, TX)	OL	6-3	310	Texas
11. Evan Stewart	Liberty (Frisco, TX)	WR	6-0	175	Texas A&M
12. Sonny Styles	Pickerington Central (Pickerington, OH)	S	6-4	215	Ohio State
13. Zach Rice	Liberty Christ Academy (Lynchburg, VA)	OT	6-6	282	North Carolina
14. Will Johnson	Grosse Pointe South (Grosse Pointe, MI)	CB	6-3	190	Michigan
15. Josh Conerly Jr.	Rainier Beach (Seattle, WA)	OT	6-5	283	Oregon
16. Gabriel Brownlow-Dindy	Lakeland (Lakeland, FL)	DL	6-3	280	Texas A&M
17. Jeremiah Alexander	Thompson (Alabaster, AL)	EDGE	6-2	235	Alabama
18. Lebbeus Overton	Milton (Alpharetta, GA)	DL	6-5	265	Texas A&M
19. Malaki Starks	Jefferson (Jefferson, GA)	ATH	6-1	200	Georgia
20. Travis Shaw	Grimsley (Greensboro, NC)	DL	6-5	310	North Carolina
21. Jihaad Campbell	IMG Academy (Erial, NJ)	EDGE	6-3	215	Alabama
22. Conner Weigman	Bridgeland (Cypress, TX)	QB	6-2	208	Texas A&M
23. Denver Harris	North Shore (Houston, TX)	CB	6-1	180	Texas A&M
24. Marvin Jones Jr.	American Heritage (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	EDGE	6-5	245	Georgia
25. Chris Marshall	Fort Bend Marshall (Missouri City, TX)	WR	6-3	195	Texas A&M
26. Ty Simpson	Westview (Martin, TN)	QB	6-2	200	Alabama
27. Jaheim Singletary	Riverside (Jacksonville, FL)	CB	6-2	170	Georgia
28. Daylen Everette	IMG Academy (Norfolk, VA)	CB	6-1	185	Georgia
29. Dani Dennis-Sutton	McDonogh School (Owings Mills, MD)	DL	6-5	250	Penn State
30. Jeadyn Lukus	Mauldin (Mauldin, SC)	CB	6-3	185	Clemson
31. Nick Singleton	Governor Mifflin (Reading, PA)	RB	6-0	210	Penn State
32. Drew Allar	Medina (Medina, OH)	QB	6-5	232	Penn State
33. Kelvin Banks Jr.	Summer Creek (Humble, TX)	OT	6-5	300	Texas
34. Jaylen Sneed	Hilton Head (Hilton Head Island, SC)	LB	6-2	210	Notre Dame
35. Aaron Anderson	Edna Karr (New Orleans, LA)	WR	5-9	185	Alabama
36. Will Campbell	Neville (Monroe, LA)	OT	6-6	300	LSU
37. Elijah Pritchett	Carver (Columbus, GA)	OT	6-6	280	Alabama
38. Kiyaunta Goodwin	Charlestown (Louisville, KY)	OT	6-8	340	Kentucky
39. Jacoby Mathews	Ponchatoula (Ponchatoula, LA)	S	6-2	193	Texas A&M
40. Emmanuel Henderson	Geneva County (Hartford, AL)	RB	6-1	185	Alabama
41. Walker Howard	St. Thomas More (Lafayette, LA)	QB	6-1	195	LSU
42. Raleek Brown	Mater Dei (Santa Ana, CA)	RB	5-8	185	USC
43. Devin Brown	Corner Canyon (Draper, UT)	QB	6-3	196	Ohio State
44. Kamari Wilson	IMG Academy (Fort Pierce, FL)	S	6-0	200	Florida
45. Earnest Greene III	St. John Bosco (Los Angeles, CA)	OL	6-5	330	Georgia
46. Jalon Walker	Salisbury (Salisbury, NC)	LB	6-2	220	Georgia
47. Enai White	Imhotep Institute (Philadelphia, PA)	EDGE	6-5	230	Texas A&M
48. Sam McCall	Lake Gibson (Lakeland, FL)	S	6-0	182	Florida State
49. Derrick Moore	St. Frances Academy (Baltimore, MD)	DL	6-4	250	Michigan
50. Bear Alexander	IMG Academy (Denton, TX)	DL	6-3	325	Georgia
51. Tetairoa McMillan	Servite (Anaheim, CA)	WR	6-4	185	Arizona
52. Isaiah Bond	Buford (Buford, GA)	ATH	5-11	175	Alabama
53. Xavier Nwankpa	Southeast Polk (Altoona, IA)	S	6-2	200	Iowa
54. Kevin Coleman	St. Mary's (Saint Louis, MO)	WR	5-11	170	Jackson State

Rankings provided by 247 COMPOSITE

Hunter: Jason Getz/Atlanta Journal-Constitution via AP

NAME	SCHOOL (HOMETOWN)	POS	HT	WT	SCHOOL
55. Kaden Saunders	Westerville South (Westerville, OH)	WR	5-10	172	Penn State
56. Shazz Preston	St. James (Saint James, LA)	WR	6-0	190	Alabama
57. Tyler Booker	IMG Academy (New Haven, CT)	OT	6-5	325	Alabama
58. Zion Branch	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV)	S	6-2	195	USC
59. Anthony Lucas	Chaparral (Scottsdale, AZ)	DL	6-5	275	Texas A&M
60. Kenyatta Jackson Jr.	Chaminade-Madonna Prep (Hollywood, FL)	EDGE	6-5	235	Ohio State
61. Antonio Williams	Dutch Fork (Irmo, SC)	WR	6-0	180	Clemson
62. Branson Robinson	Germantown (Madison, MS)	RB	5-10	220	Georgia
63. Omari Abor	Duncanville (Duncanville, TX)	EDGE	6-4	220	Ohio State
64. Kam Dewberry	Atascocita (Humble, TX)	OL	6-4	313	Texas A&M
65. Khurtiss Perry	Pike Road (Pike Road, AL)	DL	6-2	265	Alabama
66. David Bailey	Mater Dei (Santa Ana, CA)	EDGE	6-3	220	Stanford
67. Shemar James	Faith Academy (Mobile, AL)	LB	6-2	212	Florida
68. Smoke Bouie	Bainbridge (Bainbridge, GA)	S	5-11	185	Texas A&M
69. PJ Williams	Dickinson (Dickinson, TX)	OT	6-4	265	Texas A&M
70. Cyrus Moss	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV)	EDGE	6-6	220	Miami (Fla.)
71. Jaheim Oatis	Columbia (Columbia, MS)	DL	6-4	370	Alabama
72. Shawn Murphy	Unity Reed (Manassas, VA)	LB	6-2	215	Alabama
73. CJ Williams	Mater Dei (Santa Ana, CA)	WR	6-2	193	USC
74. Andre Greene Jr.	St. Christopher's School (Richmond, VA)	WR	6-3	185	North Carolina
75. Dasan McCullough	Bloomington South (Bloomington, IN)	EDGE	6-5	235	Indiana
76. Quency Wiggins	Madison Prep Academy (Baton Rouge, LA)	DL	6-5	273	LSU
77. Bryce Anderson	West Brook (Beaumont, TX)	S	6-0	190	Texas A&M
78. Kobe Prentice	Calera (Calera, AL)	WR	5-10	171	Alabama
79. Kaleb Brown	St. Rita (Chicago, IL)	WR	5-11	195	Ohio State
80. Toriano Pride Jr.	East St. Louis (East Saint Louis, IL)	CB	5-11	185	Clemson
81. Julian Humphrey	Clear Lake (Houston, TX)	CB	6-1	185	Georgia

NAME	SCHOOL (HOMETOWN)	POS	HT	WT	SCHOOL
82. Le'Veon Moss	Istrouma (Baton Rouge, LA)	RB	6-0	190	Texas A&M
83. Terrance Brooks	Little Elm (Little Elm, TX)	CB	5-11	190	Texas
84. Keon Sabb	IMG Academy (Glassboro, NJ)	S	6-2	200	Michigan
85. Joe Brunner	Whitefish Bay (Milwaukee, WI)	OT	6-6	300	Wisconsin
86. Kendrick Law	Captain Shreve (Shreveport, LA)	ATH	5-11	195	Alabama
87. Jamarion Miller	Tyler Legacy (Tyler, TX)	RB	5-10	195	Alabama
88. Kyion Grayes	Chandler (Chandler, AZ)	WR	5-11	170	Ohio State
89. Nyjalik Kelly	Dillard (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	DL	6-4	240	Miami (Fla.)
90. Azareye'h Thomas	Niceville (Niceville, FL)	ATH	6-2	181	Florida State
91. Neto Umeozulu	Allen (Allen, TX)	OL	6-4	285	Texas
92. Jordan Hudson	Garland (Garland, TX)	WR	6-1	180	TCU
93. Gentry Williams	Booker T. Washington (Tulsa, OK)	CB	6-0	170	Oklahoma
94. Malick Sylla	Katy (Katy, TX)	EDGE	6-6	230	Texas A&M
95. Jake Johnson	Oconee County (Bogart, GA)	TE	6-5	225	Texas A&M
96. Lander Barton	Brighton (Salt Lake City, UT)	LB	6-4	220	Utah
97. Barion Brown	Pearl-Cohn (Nashville, TN)	WR	6-1	173	Kentucky
98. Gavin Sawchuk	Valor Christian (Littleton, CO)	RB	5-11	185	Oklahoma
99. George Pettaway	Nansemond-Suffolk Acad. (Suffolk, VA)	RB	5-11	190	North Carolina
100. Oscar Delp	West Forsyth (Cumming, GA)	TE	6-5	224	Georgia
101. Gabe Powers	Marysville (Marysville, OH)	LB	6-4	230	Ohio State
102. Jaleel Skinner	IMG Academy (Greer, SC)	TE	6-5	216	Miami (Fla.)
103. Christen Miller	Cedar Grove (Ellenwood, GA)	DL	6-4	294	Georgia
104. Tegra Tshabola	Lakota West (West Chester, OH)	OT	6-5	344	Ohio State
105. Donovan Green	Dickinson (Dickinson, TX)	TE	6-4	235	Texas A&M
106. Earl Little	American Heritage (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	CB	6-0	175	Alabama
107. J'mond Tapp	Ascension Catholic (Donaldsonville, LA)	EDGE	6-3	245	Texas
108. Trevonte' Citizen	Lake Charles Coll. Prep (Lake Charles, LA)	RB	6-0	217	Miami (Fla.)
109. Joshua Burnham	Central (Traverse City, MI)	LB	6-4	225	Notre Dame
110. Emery Jones	Catholic (Baton Rouge, LA)	OL	6-4	341	LSU
111. Adam Randall	Myrtle Beach (Myrtle Beach, SC)	WR	6-3	215	Clemson
112. Aamil Wagner	Wayne (Dayton, OH)	OT	6-6	265	Notre Dame
113. Chris McClellan	Owasso (Owasso, OK)	DL	6-3	295	Florida
114. Marquis Groves-Killebrew	North Cobb (Acworth, GA)	CB	6-0	180	Texas A&M
115. Jovantae Barnes	Desert Pines (Las Vegas, NV)	RB	6-0	190	Oklahoma
116. Justice Finkley	Hewitt-Trussville (Trussville, AL)	EDGE	6-2	255	Texas
117. Trequon Fegans	Thompson (Alabaster, AL)	CB	6-1	181	Alabama
118. Khamauri Rogers	Holmes County (Madison, MS)	CB	6-0	150	Miami (Fla.)

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Sabb: Mike Janes/Four Seam Images via AP; Kanu: Leonard Ortiz/The Orange County Register via AP

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NAME	SCHOOL (HOMETOWN)	POS	HT	WT	SCHOOL
119. Jaishawn Barham	St. Frances Academy (District Hts., MD)	LB	6-3	230	Maryland
120. Tyson Ford	John Burroughs School (Saint Louis, MO)	DL	6-5	260	Notre Dame
121. Drew Shelton	Downingtown West (Downingtown, PA)	OT	6-5	290	Penn State
122. Tobias Merriweather	Union (Camas, WA)	WR	6-4	185	Notre Dame
123. Caden Curry	Center Grove (Greenwood, IN)	EDGE	6-3	240	Ohio State
124. Gunner Stockton	Rabun County (Tiger, GA)	QB	6-1	220	Georgia
125. Talyn Shettron	Santa Fe (Edmond, OK)	WR	6-3	185	Oklahoma State
126. Bryan Allen Jr.	Aledo (Aledo, TX)	S	6-0	185	Texas
127. Laterrance Welch	Acadiana (Lafayette, LA)	CB	6-1	180	LSU
128. Aaron Graves	Southeast Valley (Gowrie, IA)	DL	6-5	260	Iowa
129. Hero Kanu	Santa Margarita Catholic (Rancho S.M., CA)	DL	6-5	293	Ohio State
130. Robert Spears-Jennings	Broken Arrow (Broken Arrow, OK)	S	6-1	195	Oklahoma
131. Brenen Thompson	Spearman (Spearman, TX)	WR	5-10	165	Texas
132. Caleb Burton	Lake Travis (Austin, TX)	WR	6-0	165	Ohio State
133. Tyler Morris	Nazareth Academy (Bolingbrook, IL)	WR	6-0	175	Michigan
134. Omarion Hampton	Cleveland (Clayton, NC)	RB	6-0	215	North Carolina
135. C.J. Washington	Cedartown (Cedartown, GA)	LB	6-1	215	Georgia
136. Zxavian Harris	Germantown (Madison, MS)	DL	6-8	335	Ole Miss
137. Isaiah Sategna	Fayetteville (Fayetteville, AR)	WR	5-11	170	Arkansas
138. Jake Taylor	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV)	OT	6-6	290	Oklahoma
139. Sam Horn	Collins Hill (Suwanee, GA)	QB	6-4	190	Missouri
140. Devon Jackson	Burke (Omaha, NE)	LB	6-2	200	Oregon
141. Robert Woodyard Jr.	Williamson (Mobile, AL)	LB	6-1	210	Auburn
142. Addison Nichols	Greater Atlanta Christian (Norcross, GA)	OL	6-5	318	Tennessee
143. Darrius Clemons	Westview (Portland, OR)	WR	6-3	205	Michigan
144. Marquis Gracial	St. Charles (Saint Charles, MO)	DL	6-4	310	Missouri
145. Jalil Tucker	Lincoln (San Diego, CA)	CB	6-0	180	Oregon
146. Amari NiBlack	Lakewood (Clearwater, FL)	ATH	6-4	220	Alabama
147. Sebastian Cheeks	Evanston Township (Evanston, IL)	LB	6-3	210	North Carolina
148. Billy Schrauth	St. Mary's Springs (Fond Du Lac, WI)	OL	6-5	300	Notre Dame
149. Kyler Kasper	Williams Field (Gilbert, AZ)	WR	6-5	195	Oregon
150. Kojo Antwi	Lambert (Suwanee, GA)	WR	6-0	190	Ohio State
151. Julian Armella	St. Thomas Aquinas (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	OL	6-6	285	Florida State
152. Collin Sadler	Greenville (Greenville, SC)	OT	6-5	285	Clemson
153. Ernest Cooper IV	Martin (Arlington, TX)	DL	6-4	235	Stanford
154. Kaytron Allen	IMG Academy (Norfolk, VA)	RB	5-11	220	Penn State
155. Joey Tanona	Zionsville (Zionsville, IN)	OT	6-5	295	Notre Dame
156. Jaren Kanak	Hays (Hays, KS)	ATH	6-2	210	Oklahoma

NAME	SCHOOL (HOMETOWN)	POS	HT	WT	SCHOOL
157. Jahlil Florence	Lincoln (San Diego, CA)	CB	6-2	180	Oregon
158. Junior Tuihalamaka	Bishop Alemany (Mission Hills, CA)	LB	6-2	235	Notre Dame
159. Jaylon Guilbeau	Memorial (Port Arthur, TX)	CB	6-0	175	Texas
160. Chris Graves	Bishop Verot (Fort Myers, FL)	ATH	6-1	175	Miami (Fla.)
161. Davison Igbinosun	Union (Union, NJ)	CB	6-2	185	Ole Miss
162. Darris Smith	Appling County (Baxling, GA)	EDGE	6-6	225	Georgia
163. Tyre West	Tift County (Tifton, GA)	DL	6-3	280	Tennessee
164. Kobie McKinzie	Lubbock-Cooper (Lubbock, TX)	LB	6-2	245	Oklahoma
165. DJ Wesolak	Boonville (Boonville, MO)	EDGE	6-4	235	Missouri
166. Antonio Kite	Anniston (Anniston, AL)	ATH	6-1	180	Alabama
167. Kamari Ramsey	Sierra Canyon (Chatsworth, CA)	S	6-0	200	UCLA
168. Tavorus Jones	Burges (El Paso, TX)	RB	5-10	185	Missouri
169. Zeke Berry	De La Salle (Concord, CA)	S	6-0	195	Michigan
170. Nick Evers	Flower Mound (Flower Mound, TX)	QB	6-3	188	Oklahoma
171. Brady Allen	Gibson Southern (Fort Branch, IN)	QB	6-5	210	Purdue
172. AJ Duffy	IMG Academy (Murrieta, CA)	QB	6-2	223	Florida State
173. Jaray Bledsoe	Marlin (Marlin, TX)	DL	6-4	270	Texas
174. Carson Hinzman	Saint Croix Central (Hammond, WI)	OL	6-4	280	Ohio State
175. Moses Walker	Erasmus Hall (Brooklyn, NY)	LB	6-2	220	Rutgers
176. Maalik Murphy	Junipero Serra (Gardena, CA)	QB	6-5	225	Texas
177. Popeye Williams	Westfield (Westfield, IN)	EDGE	6-3	230	Louisville
178. Aiden Gobaira	Chantilly (Chantilly, VA)	EDGE	6-5	230	Notre Dame
179. Jayden Gibson	West Orange (Winter Garden, FL)	WR	6-5	185	Oklahoma
180. Mehki Flowers	Central Dauphin East (Harrisburg, PA)	ATH	6-1	190	Penn State
181. JD Rhym	Valdosta (Valdosta, GA)	CB	6-1	170	Auburn
182. Chace Biddle	Garland (Garland, TX)	S	6-0	190	TCU
183. Tyreese Fearbry	Perry Trad. Acad. (Pittsburgh, PA)	EDGE	6-5	225	Kentucky
184. Wesley Bissainthe	Miami Central (Miami, FL)	LB	6-1	205	Miami (Fla.)
185. Austin Ausberry	University Lab (Baton Rouge, LA)	CB	6-0	195	Auburn
186. Jaron Willis	Lee County (Leesburg, GA)	EDGE	6-2	235	Ole Miss
187. Eli Raridon	Valley (West Des Moines, IA)	TE	6-6	228	Notre Dame
188. Trevor Etienne	Jennings (Jennings, LA)	RB	5-9	218	Florida
189. Dave Iuli	Puyallup (Puyallup, WA)	OL	6-5	315	Oregon
190. Trevion Williams	Crystal Springs (Crystal Springs, MS)	DL	6-5	254	Mississippi St.
191. Bobby Taylor	Katy (Katy, TX)	CB	6-1	180	Texas A&M
192. Tychaun Chapman	Landstown (Virginia Beach, VA)	WR	5-9	172	North Carolina
193. Jaydon Blue	Klein Cain (Houston, TX)	RB	6-0	205	Texas

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NAME	SCHOOL (HOMETOWN)	POS	HT	WT	SCHOOL
194. Jordan James	Oakland (Murfreesboro, TN)	RB	5-10	205	Oregon
195. Keaten Wade	Summit (Spring Hill, TN)	LB	6-4	223	Kentucky
196. Alex VanSumeren	Garber (Essexville, MI)	DL	6-3	300	Michigan State
197. Jadarian Price	Denison (Denison, TX)	RB	5-11	180	Notre Dame
198. Malaki Hamrick	Shelby (Shelby, NC)	EDGE	6-4	205	North Carolina
199. Isaac Thompson	St. Louis University (Saint Louis, MO)	S	6-2	205	Missouri
200. Sherrod Covil Jr.	Oscar Smith (Chesapeake, VA)	S	6-0	185	Clemson
201. DeMario Tolan	Dr. Phillips (Orlando, FL)	LB	6-1	205	LSU
202. Jyaire Brown	Lakota West (West Chester, OH)	CB	6-0	178	Ohio State
203. Tayon Holloway	Green Run (Virginia Beach, VA)	CB	6-0	165	North Carolina
204. Blake Miller	Strongsville (Strongsville, OH)	OT	6-6	315	Clemson
205. Caden Story	Lanett (Lanett, AL)	DL	6-3	282	Clemson
206. Tayven Jackson	Center Grove (Greenwood, IN)	QB	6-4	185	Tennessee
207. Matthew Golden	Klein Cain (Houston, TX)	WR	6-0	190	Houston
208. Rayshon Luke	St. John Bosco (Bellflower, CA)	RB	5-8	175	Arizona
209. Armani Winfield	Lewisville (Lewisville, TX)	WR	6-2	180	Baylor
210. Jacolby Spells	American Heritage (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	CB	5-11	170	West Virginia
211. Jacob Allen	Hun School (Princeton, NJ)	OL	6-6	270	Rutgers
212. James Pearce	Julius L. Chambers (Charlotte, NC)	EDGE	6-5	220	Tennessee
213. Jaden Mickey	Centennial (Corona, CA)	CB	6-0	175	Notre Dame
214. Theodor M. Öhrström	RIG Academy (Sweden)	TE	6-6	245	Texas A&M
215. Nic Caraway	Bryan (Bryan, TX)	DL	6-3	258	Purdue
216. Shaleak Knotts	Monroe (Monroe, NC)	WR	6-1	184	Maryland
217. Tanner Bailey	Gordo (Gordo, AL)	QB	6-1	195	South Carolina
218. Ty Chan	Lawrence Academy (Groton, MA)	OT	6-6	300	Notre Dame
219. Keenan Nelson Jr.	St. Joseph's Prep (Philadelphia, PA)	S	6-1	200	South Carolina
220. Jimmy Rolder	Marist (Chicago, IL)	LB	6-2	220	Michigan
221. Anthony Ivey	Manheim Township (Lancaster, PA)	WR	6-0	190	Penn State
222. Gunner Givens	Lord Botetourt (Daleville, VA)	DL	6-5	270	Virginia Tech
223. Maurion Horn	Broken Arrow (Broken Arrow, OK)	ATH	5-11	175	Texas Tech
224. Deshawn Woods	Central (Omaha, NE)	OL	6-4	270	Wyoming
225. Cristian Driver	Liberty Christian (Argyle, TX)	S	5-11	185	Penn State
226. C.J. Smith	Mt. Dora (Apopka, FL)	WR	6-1	180	Georgia
227. Katin Houser	St. John Bosco (Bellflower, CA)	QB	6-3	200	Michigan State
228. Keyan Burnett	Servite (Anaheim, CA)	TE	6-4	225	Arizona
229. Dane Key	Frederick Douglass (Lexington, KY)	WR	6-2	190	Kentucky

Florence: Abbie Parr/Getty Images; Houser: Kirby Lee via AP

NAME	SCHOOL (HOMETOWN)	POS	HT	WT	SCHOOL
230. Germie Bernard	Liberty (Henderson, NV)	WR	6-2	195	Michigan State
231. Nate Johnson	Clovis (Clovis, CA)	QB	6-2	183	Utah
232. Ramon Brown	Manchester (Midlothian, VA)	RB	5-11	202	Maryland
233. Anthony Johnson	Newmann Goretti (Philadelphia, PA)	LB	6-1	230	Rutgers
234. Aaron Wilson	St. Frances Academy (Baltimore, MD)	DL	6-2	235	TBD
235. Nic Anderson	Katy (Katy, TX)	WR	6-4	195	Oklahoma
236. Isaiah Hastings	Clearwater Acad. Internat'l (Clearwater, FL)	DL	6-4	290	Alabama
237. Reggie Fleurima	Naperville Central (Naperville, IL)	WR	6-2	200	Northwestern
238. Fabian Ross	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV)	CB	6-0	185	USC
239. Jack Pedersen	Vista Murrieta (Murrieta, CA)	TE	6-4	235	UCLA
240. Kristopher Ross	North Shore (Houston, TX)	DL	6-3	280	Texas
241. TJ Dudley	Montgomery Cath. Prep. (Montgomery, AL)	LB	6-1	220	Clemson
242. Jerry Cross	King (Milwaukee, WI)	TE	6-6	257	Penn State
243. Marquez Dortch	George County (Lucedale, MS)	WR	6-0	175	Mississippi St.
244. Trevell Mullen	Coconut Creek (Pompano Beach, FL)	CB	5-11	170	Indiana
245. Tevin White	North Stafford (Stafford, VA)	RB	6-1	200	Arizona State
246. Austin Jordan	Ryan (Denton, TX)	S	6-0	190	Texas
247. De'Nylon Morrissette	North Cobb (Stone Mountain, GA)	WR	6-0	197	Georgia
248. Myles Rowser	Belleville (Detroit, MI)	S	6-0	185	Campbell
249. Jacob Sexton	Deer Creek (Edmond, OK)	OT	6-5	285	Oklahoma
250. Ryan Otton	Tumwater (Olympia, WA)	TE	6-6	224	Washington
251. DJ Allen	Gladewater (Gladewater, TX)	WR	5-11	190	TCU
252. Jaeden Gould	Bergen Catholic (Oradell, NJ)	CB	6-2	190	Nebraska
253. Ollie Gordon	Trinity (Euless, TX)	RB	6-1	210	Oklahoma St.
254. Ephesians Prysock	Bishop Alemany (Mission Hills, CA)	CB	6-3	170	Arizona
255. Jacurri Brown	Lowndes (Valdosta, GA)	QB	6-4	205	Miami (Fla.)
256. Tevarua Tafiti	Punahou (Honolulu, HI)	LB	6-3	222	Stanford
257. Joe Strickland	Brebeuf Jesuit (Indianapolis, IN)	DL	6-4	250	Purdue
258. Mason Graham	Servite (Anaheim, CA)	DL	6-4	295	Michigan
259. Gracen Halton	St. Augustine (San Diego, CA)	DL	6-3	270	Oklahoma
260. George Fitzpatrick	Cherry Creek (Englewood, CO)	OT	6-6	274	Ohio State
261. Fisher Anderson	Franklin (Franklin, TN)	OT	6-7	270	Stanford
262. Beau Atkinson	Leesville Road (Raleigh, NC)	EDGE	6-6	240	North Carolina
263. Devin Moore	Naples (Naples, FL)	S	6-3	190	Florida
264. Holden Geriner	Benedictine Military (Savannah, GA)	QB	6-3	210	Auburn

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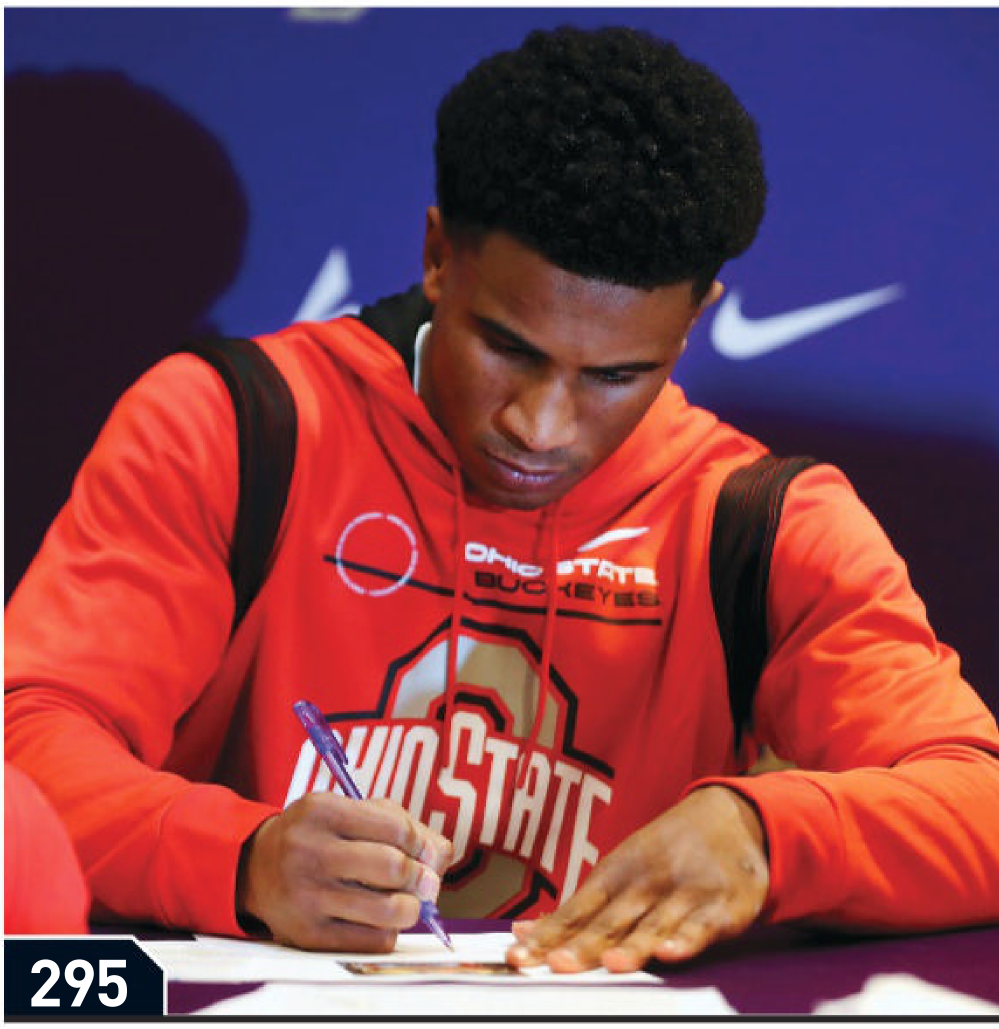
Brown: Matias J. Ocner/Miami Herald via AP; Hayden: Patrick Lantrip/Daily Memphian via AP



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NAME	SCHOOL (HOMETOWN)	POS	HT	WT	SCHOOL
265. Kip Lewis	Carthage (Carthage, TX)	LB	6-1	200	Oklahoma
266. Ken Talley	Northeast (Philadelphia, PA)	EDGE	6-3	230	Penn State
267. Anto Saka	Loyola Blakefield (Towson, MD)	EDGE	6-2	230	Northwestern
268. Kaian Roberts-Day	Festus (Festus, MO)	EDGE	6-3	240	Baylor
269. Mario Eugenio	Gaither (Clearwater, FL)	EDGE	6-3	232	Cincinnati
270. Dillon Tatum	West Bloomfield (West Bloomfield, MI)	ATH	5-11	190	Michigan State
271. Daniel Martin	Marietta (Marietta, GA)	LB	6-2	195	Vanderbilt
272. Tre Donaldson	Florida State Univ. School (Tallahassee, FL)	S	6-1	190	Auburn
273. Larry Turner-Gooden	Bishop Alemany (Mission Hills, CA)	S	6-0	179	Texas
274. Martrell Harris Jr.	The Woodlands (The Woodlands, TX)	LB	6-2	215	Texas A&M
275. Hunter Erb	Eaton (Haslet, TX)	OT	6-6	325	Texas A&M
276. Gi'Bran Payne	LaSalle (Cincinnati, OH)	RB	5-10	190	Notre Dame
277. Ja'Marion Wayne	West (Ballwin, MO)	WR	6-3	180	Missouri
278. Holden Staes	Westminster School (Atlanta, GA)	TE	6-4	230	Notre Dame
279. Nicco Marchiol	Hamilton (Chandler, AZ)	QB	6-2	216	West Virginia
280. Jadyn Marshall	St. Mary's (Stockton, CA)	WR	6-1	180	UCLA
281. Alex Afari	Lakota West (West Chester, OH)	ATH	6-2	195	Kentucky
282. Malik Agbo	Todd Beamer (Federal Way, WA)	OT	6-6	320	Texas
283. Michael Allen	J.H. Rose (Greenville, NC)	RB	5-9	203	NC State
284. Justin Williams	East Paulding (Dallas, GA)	RB	6-0	205	Tennessee
285. Justyn Martin	Inglewood (Inglewood, CA)	QB	6-4	210	UCLA
286. Sam Roush	Lipscomb Academy (Nashville, TN)	TE	6-5	225	Stanford
287. Stone Blanton	Madison-Ridgeland Acad. (Madison, MS)	LB	6-2	220	South Carolina
288. Hunter Deyo	Lewis Central (Council Bluffs, IA)	DL	6-3	270	Iowa State
289. Carsen Ryan	American Fork (American Fork, UT)	TE	6-4	235	UCLA
290. Nick James	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	DL	6-2	295	Indiana
291. Taylor Groves	East Robertson (Cross Plains, TN)	S	6-2	182	Ole Miss
292. Jaydn Ott	Norco (Norco, CA)	RB	6-0	196	California
293. Dakota Twitty	Thomas Jefferson Class Acad. (Mooresboro, NC)	WR	6-5	215	Virginia
294. Cam Miller	Trinity Christian Acad. (Jacksonville, FL)	CB	6-0	180	Penn State
295. Dallan Hayden	Christian Brothers (Memphis, TN)	RB	5-11	195	Ohio State
296. Markeith Williams	Evans (Orlando, FL)	S	6-1	170	Miami (Fla.)
297. Jaden Mangham	Wylie E. Groves (Franklin, MI)	ATH	6-3	185	Michigan State
298. Robby Snelling	McQueen (Reno, NV)	LB	6-3	200	TBD
299. Zane Durant	Lake Nona (Orlando, FL)	DL	6-1	251	Penn State
300. Cam Johnson	St. Frances Academy (Baltimore, MD)	CB	6-0	165	Virginia Tech

RECRUITING 2022 BY POSITION

QUARTERBACKS

NAME	SCHOOL (HOMETOWN)	POS	HT	WT	SCHOOL
1. Cade Klubnik	Westlake (Austin, TX)	QB	6-3	186	Clemson
2. Conner Weigman	Bridgeland (Cypress, TX)	QB	6-2	208	Texas A&M
3. Ty Simpson	Westview (Martin, TN)	QB	6-2	200	Alabama
4. Drew Allar	Medina (Medina, OH)	QB	6-5	232	Penn State
5. Walker Howard	St. Thomas More (Lafayette, LA)	QB	6-1	195	LSU
6. Devin Brown	Corner Canyon (Draper, UT)	QB	6-3	196	Ohio State
7. Gunner Stockton	Rabun County (Tiger, GA)	QB	6-1	220	Georgia
8. Sam Horn	Collins Hill (Suwanee, GA)	QB	6-4	190	Missouri
9. Nick Evers	Flower Mound (Flower Mound, TX)	QB	6-3	188	Oklahoma
10. Brady Allen	Gibson Southern (Fort Branch, IN)	QB	6-5	210	Purdue
11. AJ Duffy	IMG Academy (Murrieta, CA)	QB	6-2	223	Florida State
12. Maalik Murphy	Junipero Serra (Gardena, CA)	QB	6-5	225	Texas
13. Tayven Jackson	Center Grove (Greenwood, IN)	QB	6-4	195	Tennessee
14. Tanner Bailey	Gordo (Gordo, AL)	QB	6-1	195	South Carolina
15. Katin Houser	St. John Bosco (Bellflower, CA)	QB	6-3	200	Michigan State
16. Nate Johnson	Clovis (Clovis, CA)	QB	6-2	183	Utah
17. Jacurri Brown	Lowndes (Valdosta, GA)	QB	6-4	205	Miami (Fla.)
18. Holden Geriner	Benedictine Military (Savannah, GA)	QB	6-3	210	Auburn
19. Nicco Marchiol	Hamilton (Chandler, AZ)	QB	6-2	216	West Virginia
20. Justyn Martin	Inglewood (Inglewood, CA)	QB	6-4	210	UCLA
21. Steve Angeli	Bergen Catholic (Oradell, NJ)	QB	6-3	215	Notre Dame
22. Garret Rangel	Lone Star (Frisco, TX)	QB	6-2	175	Oklahoma State
23. Braden Davis	Middletown (Middletown, DE)	QB	6-5	195	South Carolina
24. Braedyn Locke	Rockwall (Rockwall, TX)	QB	6-1	195	Mississippi St.
25. AJ Swann	Cherokee (Canton, GA)	QB	6-3	200	Vanderbilt
26. Zach Pyron	Pinson Valley (Pinson, AL)	QB	6-3	215	Georgia Tech
27. MJ Morris	Carrollton (Carrollton, GA)	QB	6-2	190	NC State
28. Alex Orji	Sachse (Sachse, TX)	QB	6-2	226	Michigan
29. Jayden Denegal	Apple Valley (Apple Valley, CA)	QB	6-4	215	Michigan
30. Beau Pribula	Central York (York, PA)	QB	6-2	215	Penn State
31. Carson May	Jones (Jones, OK)	QB	6-5	220	Missouri
32. Peter Delaportas	Jefferson Township (Oak Ridge, NJ)	QB	6-4	205	Boston College
33. Cameron Edge	Smyrna (Smyrna, DE)	QB	6-1	190	Maryland
34. Rocco Becht	Wiregrass Ranch (Zephyrhills, FL)	QB	6-1	190	Iowa State
35. Brandon Rose	Murrieta Valley (Murrieta, CA)	QB	6-2	195	Utah
36. Zion Turner	St. Thomas Aquinas (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	QB	6-2	185	UConn
37. Tevin Carter	PURE Youth (Memphis, TN)	QB	6-3	230	Memphis
38. Noah Fifita	Servite (Anaheim, CA)	QB	5-10	170	Arizona
39. Adryan Lara	Desert Edge (Goodyear, AZ)	QB	6-2	215	Kansas State
40. Josh Hoover	Rockwall-Heath (Rockwall, TX)	QB	6-2	206	TCU
41. Khalib Johnson	Clay-Chalkville (Pinson, AL)	QB	6-2	200	Louisville
42. Joshua Wood	Graham-Kapowsin (Graham, WA)	QB	6-3	185	Fresno State
43. Myles Burkett	Franklin (Franklin, WI)	QB	6-2	205	Wisconsin
44. Luther Richesson	Lipscomb Academy (Nashville, TN)	QB	6-3	204	Cincinnati
45. Conner Harrell	Thompson (Alabster, AL)	QB	6-1	189	North Carolina
46. Jaxon Dailey	Southeast Polk (Des Moines, IA)	QB	6-2	190	Arkansas State
47. Jayden Sauray	Dr. Henry Wise (Upper Marlboro, MD)	QB	6-0	205	Maryland
48. Kaden Cobb	Fenwick (Naperville, IL)	QB	6-3	180	Ball State
49. Devin Farrell	Milton (Alpharetta, GA)	QB	6-0	192	Virginia Tech
50. Caden Veltkamp	South Warren (Bowling Green, KY)	QB	6-5	215	WKU

RUNNING BACKS

NAME	SCHOOL (HOMETOWN)	POS	HT	WT	SCHOOL
1. Nick Singleton	Governor Mifflin (Reading, PA)	RB	6-0	210	Penn State
2. Emmanuel Henderson	Geneva County (Hartford, AL)	RB	6-1	185	Alabama
3. Raleek Brown	Mater Dei (Santa Ana, CA)	RB	5-8	185	USC
4. Branson Robinson	Germantown (Madison, MS)	RB	5-10	220	Georgia
5. Le'Veon Moss	Istrouma (Baton Rouge, LA)	RB	6-0	190	Texas A&M
6. Jamarion Miller	Tyler Legacy (Tyler, TX)	RB	5-10	195	Alabama
7. Gavin Sawchuk	Valor Christian (Littleton, CO)	RB	5-11	185	Oklahoma
8. George Pettaway	Nansemond-Suffolk Acad. (Suffolk, VA)	RB	5-11	190	North Carolina
9. Trevonte' Citizen	Lake Charles Coll. Prep (Lake Charles, LA)	RB	6-0	217	Miami (Fla.)
10. Jovantae Barnes	Desert Pines (Las Vegas, NV)	RB	6-0	190	Oklahoma
11. Omarion Hampton	Cleveland (Clayton, NC)	RB	6-0	215	North Carolina
12. Kaytron Allen	IMG Academy (Norfolk, VA)	RB	5-11	220	Penn State
13. Tavorus Jones	Burges (El Paso, TX)	RB	5-10	195	Missouri
14. Trevor Etienne	Jennings (Jennings, LA)	RB	5-9	218	Florida
15. Jaydon Blue	Klein Cain (Houston, TX)	RB	6-0	205	Texas
16. Jordan James	Oakland (Murfreesboro, TN)	RB	5-10	205	Oregon
17. Jadarian Price	Denison (Denison, TX)	RB	5-11	180	Notre Dame
18. Rayshon Luke	St. John Bosco (Bellflower, CA)	RB	5-8	175	Arizona
19. Ramon Brown	Manchester (Midlothian, VA)	RB	5-11	202	Maryland
20. Tevin White	North Stafford (Stafford, VA)	RB	6-1	200	Arizona State
21. Ollie Gordon	Trinity (Euless, TX)	RB	6-1	210	Oklahoma St.
22. Gi'Bran Payne	LaSalle (Cincinnati, OH)	RB	5-10	190	Notre Dame
23. Michael Allen	J.H. Rose (Greenville, NC)	RB	5-9	203	NC State
24. Justin Williams	East Paulding (Dallas, GA)	RB	6-0	205	Tennessee
25. Jaydn Ott	Norco (Norco, CA)	RB	6-0	196	California
26. Dallan Hayden	Christian Brothers (Memphis, TN)	RB	5-11	195	Ohio State
27. Arlen Harris Jr.	Lutheran of St. Charles Co. (Saint Peters, MO)	RB	5-11	189	Stanford
28. Antonio Martin	Langston Hughes (Fairburn, GA)	RB	5-11	205	Georgia Tech
29. Terrance Gibbs	Winter Park (Winter Park, FL)	RB	6-0	190	Georgia So.
30. CJ Brown	Beggs (Beggs, OK)	RB	5-11	175	Oklahoma St.
31. Demond Claiborne	King William (King William, VA)	RB	5-10	180	Wake Forest
32. Damari Alston	Woodward Academy (Atlanta, GA)	RB	5-10	205	Auburn
33. Jaylon Glover	Lake Gibson (Lakeland, FL)	RB	5-7	205	Utah
34. Samuel Brown V	La Salle College (Glenside, PA)	RB	6-1	195	Rutgers
35. Kaleb Johnson	Hamilton (Hamilton, OH)	RB	6-1	215	Iowa
36. Dylan Sampson	Dutchtown (Geismar, LA)	RB	5-9	180	Tennessee
37. Jamie Felix	Camden County (Kingsland, GA)	RB	5-10	195	Georgia Tech
38. Jonah Coleman	Lincoln (Stockton, CA)	RB	5-9	205	Arizona
39. Major Everhart	Tascosa (Amarillo, TX)	RB	5-11	170	TCU
40. Ajay Allen	Neville (Monroe, LA)	RB	5-11	182	Nebraska
41. Kentrell Marks	Valley Forge (Cleveland, OH)	RB	6-1	180	Purdue
42. Andrew Paul	Parish Episcopal School (Dallas, TX)	RB	5-11	220	Georgia
43. DeAnthony Gatson	Newton (Newton, TX)	RB	5-10	198	Louisiana Tech
44. Bryson Donnell	Tyler Legacy (Tyler, TX)	RB	5-11	204	Texas Tech
45. Xavier Townsend	Berkeley Prep (Tampa, FL)	RB	5-10	170	UCF
46. Quinshon Judkins	Pike Road (Pike Road, AL)	RB	5-11	200	Ole Miss
47. Lucky Sutton	Cathedral Catholic (San Diego, CA)	RB	6-1	205	San Diego St.
48. Damien Martinez	Lewisville (Lewisville, TX)	RB	5-10	220	Oregon State
49. James Jointer	Parkview Magnet (Little Rock, AR)	RB	6-0	210	Arkansas
50. Ashton Hayes	McQueen (Reno, NV)	RB	5-11	180	California

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TIGHT ENDS

NAME	SCHOOL (HOMETOWN)	POS	HT	WT	SCHOOL
1. Jake Johnson	Oconee County (Bogart, GA)	TE	6-5	225	Texas A&M
2. Oscar Delp	West Forsyth (Cumming, GA)	TE	6-5	224	Georgia
3. Jaleel Skinner	IMG Academy (Greer, SC)	TE	6-5	216	Miami (Fla.)
4. Donovan Green	Dickinson (Dickinson, TX)	TE	6-4	235	Texas A&M
5. Eli Raridon	Valley (West Des Moines, IA)	TE	6-6	228	Notre Dame
6. Theodor M. Öhrström	RIG Academy (Sweden)	TE	6-6	245	Texas A&M
7. Keyan Burnett	Servite (Anaheim, CA)	TE	6-4	225	Arizona
8. Jack Pedersen	Vista Murrieta (Murrieta, CA)	TE	6-4	235	UCLA
9. Jerry Cross	King (Milwaukee, WI)	TE	6-6	257	Penn State
10. Ryan Otton	Tumwater (Olympia, WA)	TE	6-6	224	Washington
11. Holden Staes	Westminster School (Atlanta, GA)	TE	6-4	230	Notre Dame
12. Sam Roush	Lipscomb Academy (Nashville, TN)	TE	6-5	225	Stanford
13. Carsen Ryan	American Fork (American Fork, UT)	TE	6-4	235	UCLA
14. Elijah Brown	Wayne (Dayton, OH)	TE	6-5	230	Alabama
15. Colston Loveland	Gooding (Gooding, ID)	TE	6-5	230	Michigan
16. Kaden Helms	Bellevue West (Bellevue, NE)	TE	6-5	222	Oklahoma
17. Benji Gosnell	Carroll County (Pilot Mountain, NC)	TE	6-5	240	Virginia Tech
18. RJ Maryland	Southlake Carroll (Southlake, TX)	TE	6-3	205	SMU
19. Micah Riley-Ducker	Bellevue West (Bellevue, NE)	TE	6-6	235	Auburn
20. Bennett Christian	Allatoona (Acworth, GA)	TE	6-6	235	Ohio State

WIDE RECEIVERS

NAME	SCHOOL (HOMETOWN)	POS	HT	WT	SCHOOL
1. Luther Burden III	East St. Louis (East Saint Louis, IL)	WR	6-0	200	Missouri
2. Evan Stewart	Liberty (Frisco, TX)	WR	6-0	175	Texas A&M
3. Chris Marshall	Fort Bend Marshall (Missouri City, TX)	WR	6-3	195	Texas A&M
4. Aaron Anderson	Edna Karr (New Orleans, LA)	WR	5-9	185	Alabama
5. Tetairoa McMillan	Servite (Anaheim, CA)	WR	6-4	185	Arizona
6. Kevin Coleman	St. Mary's (Saint Louis, MO)	WR	5-11	170	Jackson State
7. Kaden Saunders	Westerville South (Westerville, OH)	WR	5-10	172	Penn State
8. Shazz Preston	St. James (Saint James, LA)	WR	6-0	190	Alabama
9. Antonio Williams	Dutch Fork (Irmo, SC)	WR	6-0	180	Clemson
10. CJ Williams	Mater Dei (Santa Ana, CA)	WR	6-2	193	USC
11. Andre Greene Jr.	St. Christopher's School (Richmond, VA)	WR	6-3	185	North Carolina
12. Kobe Prentice	Calera (Calera, AL)	WR	5-10	171	Alabama
13. Kaleb Brown	St. Rita (Chicago, IL)	WR	5-11	195	Ohio State
14. Kylon Grayes	Chandler (Chandler, AZ)	WR	5-11	170	Ohio State
15. Jordan Hudson	Garland (Garland, TX)	WR	6-1	180	TCU
16. Barion Brown	Pearl-Cohn (Nashville, TN)	WR	6-1	173	Kentucky
17. Adam Randall	Myrtle Beach (Myrtle Beach, SC)	WR	6-3	215	Clemson
18. Tobias Merriweather	Union (Camas, WA)	WR	6-4	185	Notre Dame
19. Talyn Shettron	Santa Fe (Edmond, OK)	WR	6-3	185	Oklahoma St.
20. Brenen Thompson	Spearman (Spearman, TX)	WR	5-10	165	Texas
21. Caleb Burton	Lake Travis (Austin, TX)	WR	6-0	165	Ohio State
22. Tyler Morris	Nazareth Academy (Bolingbrook, IL)	WR	6-0	175	Michigan
23. Isaiah Sategna	Fayetteville (Fayetteville, AR)	WR	5-11	170	Arkansas
24. Darrius Clemons	Westview (Portland, OR)	WR	6-3	205	Michigan
25. Kyler Kasper	Williams Field (Gilbert, AZ)	WR	6-5	195	Oregon
26. Kojo Antwi	Lambert (Suwanee, GA)	WR	6-0	190	Ohio State
27. Jayden Gibson	West Orange (Winter Garden, FL)	WR	6-5	185	Oklahoma
28. Tychaun Chapman	Landstown (Virginia Beach, VA)	WR	5-9	172	North Carolina
29. Matthew Golden	Klein Cain (Houston, TX)	WR	6-0	190	Houston
30. Armani Winfield	Lewisville (Lewisville, TX)	WR	6-2	180	Baylor
31. Shaleak Knotts	Monroe (Monroe, NC)	WR	6-1	184	Maryland
32. Anthony Ivey	Manheim Township (Lancaster, PA)	WR	6-0	190	Penn State
33. C.J. Smith	Mt. Dora (Apopka, FL)	WR	6-1	180	Georgia
34. Dane Key	Frederick Douglass (Lexington, KY)	WR	6-2	190	Kentucky
35. Germie Bernard	Liberty (Henderson, NV)	WR	6-2	195	Michigan State
36. Nic Anderson	Katy (Katy, TX)	WR	6-4	195	Oklahoma
37. Reggie Fleurima	Naperville Central (Naperville, IL)	WR	6-2	200	Northwestern
38. Marquez Dortch	George County (Lucedale, MS)	WR	6-0	175	Mississippi St.
39. De'Nylon Morrissette	North Cobb (Stone Mountain, GA)	WR	6-0	197	Georgia
40. DJ Allen	Gladewater (Gladewater, TX)	WR	5-11	190	TCU
41. Ja'Marion Wayne	West (Ballwin, MO)	WR	6-3	180	Missouri
42. Jadyn Marshall	St. Mary's (Stockton, CA)	WR	6-1	180	UCLA
43. Dakota Twitty	Thomas Jefferson Class Acad. (Mooresboro, NC)	WR	6-5	215	Virginia
44. Omar Cooper Jr.	Lawrence North (Indianapolis, IN)	WR	6-1	185	Indiana
45. Antonio Gates Jr.	Fordson (Dearborn, MI)	WR	6-1	185	Michigan State
46. Noah Thomas	Clear Springs (League City, TX)	WR	6-5	180	Texas A&M
47. Kaleb Webb	McEachern (Powder Springs, GA)	WR	6-3	185	Tennessee
48. Cody Hagen	Corner Canyon (Draper, UT)	WR	6-1	175	BYU
49. Jeremiah Dillon	Tylertown (Tylertown, MS)	WR	6-2	180	Ole Miss
50. Janiran Bonner	Cedar Grove (Ellenwood, GA)	WR	6-1	193	Nebraska

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN

NAME	SCHOOL (HOMETOWN)	POS	HT	WT	SCHOOL
1. Devon Campbell	Bowie (Arlington, TX)	OL	6-3	310	Texas
2. Zach Rice	Liberty Christian Acad. (Lynchburg, VA)	OT	6-6	282	North Carolina
3. Josh Conerly Jr.	Rainier Beach (Seattle, WA)	OT	6-5	283	Oregon
4. Kelvin Banks Jr.	Summer Creek (Humble, TX)	OT	6-5	300	Texas
5. Will Campbell	Neville (Monroe, LA)	OT	6-6	300	LSU
6. Elijah Pritchett	Carver (Columbus, GA)	OT	6-6	280	Alabama
7. Kiyaunta Goodwin	Charlestown (Louisville, KY)	OT	6-8	340	Kentucky
8. Earnest Greene III	St. John Bosco (Los Angeles, CA)	OL	6-5	330	Georgia
9. Tyler Booker	IMG Academy (New Haven, CT)	OT	6-5	325	Alabama
10. Kam Dewberry	Atascocita (Humble, TX)	OL	6-4	313	Texas A&M
11. PJ Williams	Dickinson (Dickinson, TX)	OT	6-4	265	Texas A&M
12. Joe Brunner	Whitefish Bay (Milwaukee, WI)	OT	6-6	300	Wisconsin
13. Neto Umeozulu	Allen (Allen, TX)	OL	6-4	285	Texas
14. Tegra Tshabola	Lakota West (West Chester, OH)	OT	6-5	344	Ohio State
15. Emery Jones	Catholic (Baton Rouge, LA)	OL	6-4	341	LSU
16. Aamil Wagner	Wayne (Dayton, OH)	OT	6-6	265	Notre Dame
17. Drew Shelton	Downington West (Downington, PA)	OT	6-5	290	Penn State
18. Jake Taylor	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV)	OT	6-6	290	Oklahoma
19. Addison Nichols	Greater Atlanta Christian (Norcross, GA)	OL	6-5	318	Tennessee
20. Billy Schrauth	St. Mary's Springs (Fon Du Lac, WI)	OL	6-5	300	Notre Dame
21. Julian Armella	St. Thomas Aquinas (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	OL	6-6	285	Florida State
22. Collin Sadler	Greenville (Greenville, SC)	OT	6-5	285	Clemson
23. Joey Tanona	Zionsville (Zionsville, IN)	OT	6-5	295	Notre Dame
24. Carson Hinzman	Saint Croix Central (Hammond, WI)	OL	6-4	280	Ohio State
25. Dave Iuli	Puyallup (Puyallup, WA)	OL	6-5	315	Oregon
26. Blake Miller	Strongsville (Strongsville, OH)	OT	6-6	315	Clemson
27. Jacob Allen	Hun School (Princeton, NJ)	OL	6-6	270	Rutgers
28. Ty Chan	Lawrence Academy (Groton, MA)	OT	6-6	300	Notre Dame
29. Deshawn Woods	Central (Omaha, NE)	OL	6-4	270	Wyoming
30. Jacob Sexton	Deer Creek (Edmond, OK)	OT	6-5	285	Oklahoma
31. George Fitzpatrick	Cherry Creek (Englewood, CO)	OT	6-6	274	Ohio State
32. Fisher Anderson	Franklin (Franklin, TN)	OT	6-7	270	Stanford
33. Hunter Erb	Eaton (Haslet, TX)	OT	6-6	325	Texas A&M
34. Malik Agbo	Todd Beamer (Federal Way, WA)	OT	6-6	320	Texas
35. Andrew Chamblee	Maumelle (Maumelle, AR)	OT	6-7	305	Arkansas
36. Tony Livingston	King (Tampa, FL)	OT	6-4	260	Florida
37. E'Marion Harris	Joe T. Robinson (Little Rock, AR)	OT	6-7	370	Arkansas
38. Lucas Heyer	Hill Murray School (Saint Paul, MN)	OT	6-5	307	Stanford
39. E.J. Harris	Auburn (Auburn, AL)	OT	6-6	290	Auburn
40. Jaylen Early	Duncanville (Duncanville, TX)	OL	6-4	320	Florida State
41. Grant Bingham	Johnson Central (Paintsville, KY)	OT	6-6	302	Kentucky
42. Aliou Bah	IMG Academy (Memphis, TN)	OT	6-5	325	Georgia
43. Qae'shon Sapp	Lee County (Leesburg, GA)	OT	6-4	325	Florida State
44. Ryan Baer	North (Eastlake, OH)	OT	6-7	320	Pittsburgh
45. Cole Hutson	Frisco (Tyler, TX)	OL	6-5	312	Texas
46. Cameron Williams	Duncanville (Duncanville, TX)	OT	6-5	360	Texas
47. Patrick Kutas	Christian Brothers (Memphis, TN)	OL	6-6	303	Arkansas
48. Dayne Shor	Denmark (Alpharetta, GA)	OT	6-6	295	Alabama
49. George Maile	Bingham (South Jordan, UT)	OL	6-4	290	Baylor
50. Bryson Hurst	Gautier (Gautier, MS)	OT	6-6	320	Ole Miss

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN

NAME	SCHOOL (HOMETOWN)	POS	HT	WT	SCHOOL
1. Walter Nolen	Powell (Powell, TN)	DL	6-4	325	Texas A&M
2. Mykel Williams	Hardaway (Columbus, GA)	DL	6-5	265	Georgia
3. Shemar Stewart	Monsignor Prep (Opa Locka, FL)	DL	6-6	272	Texas A&M
4. Gabriel Brownlow-Dindy	Lakeland (Lakeland, FL)	DL	6-3	280	Texas A&M
5. Jeremiah Alexander	Thompson (Alabaster, AL)	EDGE	6-2	235	Alabama
6. Lebbeus Overton	Milton (Alpharetta, GA)	DL	6-5	265	Texas A&M
7. Travis Shaw	Grimsley (Greensboro, NC)	DL	6-5	310	North Carolina
8. Jihaad Campbell	IMG Academy (Erial, NJ)	EDGE	6-3	215	Alabama
9. Marvin Jones Jr.	American Heritage (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	EDGE	6-5	245	Georgia
10. Dani Dennis-Sutton	McDonogh School (Owings Mills, MD)	DL	6-5	250	Penn State
11. Enai White	Imhotep Institute (Philadelphia, PA)	EDGE	6-5	230	Texas A&M
12. Derrick Moore	St. Frances Academy (Baltimore, MD)	DL	6-4	250	Michigan
13. Bear Alexander	IMG Academy (Denton, TX)	DL	6-3	325	Georgia
14. Anthony Lucas	Chaparral (Scottsdale, AZ)	DL	6-5	275	Texas A&M
15. Kenyatta Jackson Jr.	Chaminade-Madonna Prep (Hollywood, FL)	EDGE	6-5	235	Ohio State
16. Omari Abor	Duncanville (Duncanville, TX)	EDGE	6-4	240	Ohio State
17. Khurtiss Perry	Pike Road (Pike Road, AL)	DL	6-2	265	Alabama
18. David Bailey	Mater Dei (Santa Ana, CA)	EDGE	6-3	220	Stanford
19. Cyrus Moss	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV)	EDGE	6-6	220	Miami (Fla.)
20. Jaheim Oatis	Columbia (Columbia, MS)	DL	6-4	370	Alabama
21. Dasan McCullough	Bloomington South (Bloomington, IN)	EDGE	6-5	235	Indiana
22. Quency Wiggins	Madison Prep Acad. (Baton Rouge, LA)	DL	6-5	273	LSU
23. Nyjalik Kelly	Dillard (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	DL	6-4	240	Miami (Fla.)
24. Malick Sylla	Katy (Katy, TX)	EDGE	6-6	230	Texas A&M
25. Christen Miller	Cedar Grove (Ellenwood, GA)	DL	6-4	294	Georgia
26. J'Mond Tapp	Ascension Catholic (Donaldsonville, LA)	EDGE	6-3	245	Texas
27. Chris McClellan	Owasso (Owasso, OK)	DL	6-3	295	Florida
28. Justice Finkley	Hewitt-Trussville (Trussville, AL)	EDGE	6-2	255	Texas
29. Tyson Ford	John Burroughs School (Saint Louis, MO)	DL	6-5	260	Notre Dame
30. Caden Curry	Center Grove (Greenwood, IN)	EDGE	6-3	240	Ohio State
31. Aaron Graves	Southeast Valley (Gowrie, IA)	DL	6-5	260	Iowa
32. Hero Kanu	Santa Margarita Cath. (Rancho S.M., CA)	DL	6-5	293	Ohio State
33. Zxavian Harris	Germantown (Madison, MS)	DL	6-8	335	Ole Miss
34. Marquis Gracial	St. Charles (Saint Charles, MO)	DL	6-4	310	Missouri
35. Ernest Cooper IV	Martin (Arlington, TX)	DL	6-4	235	Stanford
36. Darris Smith	Appling County (Baxley, GA)	EDGE	6-6	225	Georgia
37. Tyre West	Tift County (Tifton, GA)	DL	6-3	280	Tennessee
38. DJ Wesolak	Boonville (Boonville, MO)	EDGE	6-4	235	Missouri
39. Jaray Bledsoe	Marlin (Marlin, TX)	DL	6-4	270	Texas
40. Popeye Williams	Westfield (Westfield, IN)	EDGE	6-3	230	Louisville
41. Aiden Gobaira	Chantilly (Chantilly, VA)	EDGE	6-5	230	Notre Dame
42. Tyreese Fearbry	Perry Trad. Acad. (Pittsburgh, PA)	EDGE	6-5	225	Kentucky
43. Jaron Willis	Lee County (Leesburg, GA)	EDGE	6-2	235	Ole Miss
44. Trevion Williams	Crystal Springs (Crystal Springs, MS)	DL	6-5	254	Mississippi St.
45. Alex VanSumeren	Garber (Essexville, MI)	DL	6-3	300	Michigan State
46. Malaki Hamrick	Shelby (Shelby, NC)	EDGE	6-4	205	North Carolina
47. Caden Story	Lanett (Lanett, AL)	DL	6-3	282	Clemson
48. James Pearce	Julius L. Chambers (Charlotte, NC)	EDGE	6-5	220	Tennessee
49. Nic Caraway	Bryan (Bryan, TX)	DL	6-3	258	Purdue
50. Gunner Givens	Lord Botetourt (Daleville, VA)	DL	6-5	270	Virginia Tech
51. Aaron Wilson	St. Frances Academy (Baltimore, MD)	DL	6-2	235	TBD
52. Isaiah Hastings	Clearwater Acad. Int'l (Clearwater, FL)	DL	6-4	290	Alabama
53. Kristopher Ross	North Shore (Houston, TX)	DL	6-3	280	Texas
54. Joe Strickland	Brebeuf Jesuit (Indianapolis, IN)	DL	6-4	250	Purdue
55. Mason Graham	Servite (Anaheim, CA)	DL	6-4	295	Michigan
56. Gracen Halton	St. Augustine (San Diego, CA)	DL	6-3	270	Oklahoma
57. Beau Atkinson	Leesville Road (Raleigh, NC)	EDGE	6-6	240	North Carolina
58. Ken Talley	Northeast (Philadelphia, PA)	EDGE	6-3	230	Penn State
59. Anto Saka	Loyola Blakefield (Towson, MD)	EDGE	6-2	230	Northwestern
60. Kaian Roberts-Day	Festus (Festus, MO)	EDGE	6-3	240	Baylor
61. Mario Eugenio	Gaither (Clearwater, FL)	EDGE	6-3	232	Cincinnati
62. Hunter Deyo	Lewis Central (Council Bluffs, IA)	DL	6-3	270	Iowa State
63. Nick James	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	DL	6-2	295	Indiana
64. Zane Durant	Lake Nona (Orlando, FL)	DL	6-1	251	Penn State
65. Walter Bob	Acadiana (Lafayette, LA)	DL	6-4	245	Alabama
66. Derrick Brown	Texas High (Texarkana, TX)	EDGE	6-3	210	Texas
67. Deone Walker	Cass Technical (Detroit, MI)	DL	6-6	350	Kentucky
68. Vincent Anthony Jr.	C.E. Jordan (Durham, NC)	DL	6-5	232	Duke
69. Anthony Smith	Shippensburg Area (Shippensburg, PA)	DL	6-5	280	Minnesota
70. Trey Bixby	Eden Prairie (Minneapolis, MN)	DL	6-5	250	Minnesota
71. Joshua Josephs	North Cobb (Kennesaw, GA)	EDGE	6-3	215	Tennessee
72. Aisea Moa	Weber (Ogden, UT)	DL	6-2	240	BYU
73. Carlton Madden	Cedar Grove (Ellenwood, GA)	EDGE	6-3	239	Georgia
74. Isaac Hamm	Sun Prairie (Sun Prairie, WI)	DL	6-5	260	Wisconsin
75. Dante Anderson	Homestead (Homestead, FL)	EDGE	6-3	205	Florida State

LINEBACKERS

1. C.J. Hicks	Archbishop Alter (Dayton, OH)	LB	6-3	215	Ohio State
2. Harold Perkins	Cy Park (Cypress, TX)	LB	6-3	210	LSU
3. Jaylen Sneed	Hilton Head (Hilton Head Island, SC)	LB	6-2	210	Notre Dame
4. Jalon Walker	Salisbury (Salisbury, NC)	LB	6-2	220	Georgia
5. Shemar James	Faith Academy (Mobile, AL)	LB	6-2	212	Florida
6. Shawn Murphy	Unity Reed (Manassas, VA)	LB	6-2	215	Alabama
7. Lander Barton	Brighton (Salt Lake City, UT)	LB	6-4	220	Utah
8. Gabe Powers	Marysville (Marysville, OH)	LB	6-4	230	Ohio State
9. Joshua Burnham	Central (Traverse City, MI)	LB	6-4	225	Notre Dame
10. Jaishawn Barham	St. Frances Acad. (District Heights MD)	LB	6-3	230	Maryland
11. C.J. Washington	Cedartown (Cedartown, GA)	LB	6-1	215	Georgia
12. Devon Jackson	Burke (Omaha, NE)	LB	6-2	200	Oregon
13. Robert Woodyard Jr.	Williamson (Mobile, AL)	LB	6-1	210	Auburn
14. Sebastian Cheeks	Evanston Township (Evanston, IL)	LB	6-3	210	North Carolina
15. Junior Tuihalamaka	Bishop Alemany (Mission Hills, CA)	LB	6-2	235	Notre Dame
16. Kobie McKinzie	Lubbock-Cooper (Lubbock, TX)	LB	6-2	245	Oklahoma
17. Moses Walker	Erasmus Hall (Brooklyn, NY)	LB	6-2	220	Rutgers
18. Wesley Bissainthe	Miami Central (Miami, FL)	LB	6-1	205	Miami (Fla.)
19. Keaten Wade	Summit (Spring Hill, TN)	LB	6-4	223	Kentucky
20. DeMario Tolan	Dr. Phillips (Orlando, FL)	LB	6-1	205	LSU
21. Jimmy Rolder	Marist (Chicago, IL)	LB	6-2	220	Michigan
22. Anthony Johnson	Neumann Goretti (Philadelphia, PA)	LB	6-1	230	Rutgers
23. TJ Dudley	Montgomery Cath. Prep (Montgomery, AL)	LB	6-1	220	Clemson
24. Tevarua Tafiti	Punahou (Honolulu, HI)	LB	6-3	222	Stanford
25. Kip Lewis	Carthage (Carthage, TX)	LB	6-1	200	Oklahoma
26. Daniel Martin	Marietta (Marietta, GA)	LB	6-2	195	Vanderbilt
27. Martrell Harris Jr.	The Woodlands (The Woodlands, TX)	LB	6-2	215	Texas A&M
28. Stone Blanton	Madison-Ridgeland Acad. (Madison, MS)	LB	6-2	220	South Carolina
29. Robby Snelling	McQueen (Reno, NV)	LB	6-3	200	TBD
30. Abdul Carter	La Salle College (Glenside, PA)	LB	6-4	235	Penn State
31. Nolan Ziegler	Catholic Central (Grand Rapids, MI)	LB	6-4	210	Notre Dame
32. Torren Wright	A L Brown (Kannapolis, NC)	LB	6-2	210	NC State
33. Sterling Lane II	Oaks Christian (Westlake Village, CA)	LB	6-4	235	Arizona
34. Dishawn Misa	Eastside Catholic (Sammamish, WA)	LB	6-3	220	Boise State
35. Harrison Taggart	Corner Canyon (Draper, UT)	LB	6-2	200	Oregon
36. Ish Harris	Pilot Point (Pilot Point, TX)	LB	6-3	195	Texas A&M
37. Xavier Simmons	Northwest Guilford (Greensboro, NC)	LB	6-3	235	Missouri
38. Donovan Westmoreland	Griffin (Griffin, GA)	LB	6-0	214	South Carolina
39. Travious Lathan	Gulliver Prep (Miami, FL)	LB	6-1	205	West Virginia
40. Javae Gilmore	Amite (Amite, LA)	LB	6-4	200	Mississippi St.
41. Keon Wylie	Imhotep Institute (Philadelphia, PA)	LB	6-2	210	Penn State
42. Khalid Moore	Poplarville (Poplarville, MS)	LB	6-2	206	Mississippi St.
43. Jacob Imming	Sergeant Bluff-Luton (Sergeant Bluff, IA)	LB	6-2	215	Iowa State
44. Justin Medlock	Manvel (Manvel, TX)	LB	6-1	210	Utah
45. Michael Williams II	West Bloomfield (West Bloomfield, MI)	LB	6-3	220	USF
46. Melvin Jordan	Calvary Christian (Saint Petersburg, FL)	LB	5-11	215	Oregon State
47. EJ Lightsey	Fitzgerald (Fitzgerald, GA)	LB	6-2	210	Georgia
48. Langston Patterson	CPA (Nashville, TN)	LB	6-1	220	Vanderbilt
49. Trevell Johnson	Martin (Arlington, TX)	LB	6-1	200	Texas
50. Aidan Vaughan	Walled Lake Western (Walled Lake, MI)	LB	6-3	215	Wisconsin

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Kirby Lee via AP

DEFENSIVE BACKS

1. Travis Hunter	Collins Hill (Suwanee, GA)	CB	6-1	165	Jackson State
2. Domani Jackson	Mater Dei (Santa Ana, CA)	CB	6-1	185	USC
3. Sonny Styles	Pickerington Central (Pickerington, OH)	S	6-4	215	Ohio State
4. Will Johnson	Grosse Pointe South (Grosse Point, MI)	CB	6-3	190	Michigan
5. Denver Harris	North Shore (Houston, TX)	CB	6-1	180	Texas A&M
6. Jaheim Singletary	Riverside (Jacksonville, FL)	CB	6-2	170	Georgia
7. Daylen Everette	IMG Academy (Norfolk, VA)	CB	6-1	185	Georgia
8. Jeadyn Lukus	Mauldin (Mauldin, SC)	CB	6-3	185	Clemson
9. Jacoby Mathews	Ponchatoula (Ponchatoula, LA)	S	6-2	193	Texas A&M
10. Kamari Wilson	IMG Academy (Fort Pierce, FL)	S	6-0	200	Florida
11. Sam McCall	Lake Gibson (Lakeland, FL)	S	6-0	182	Florida State
12. Xavier Nwankpa	Southeast Polk (Altoona, IA)	S	6-2	200	Iowa
13. Zion Branch	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV)	S	6-2	195	USC
14. Smoke Bouie	Bainbridge (Bainbridge, GA)	S	5-11	185	Texas A&M
15. Bryce Anderson	West Brook (Beaumont, TX)	S	6-0	190	Texas A&M
16. Toriano Pride Jr.	East St. Louis (East Saint Louis, IL)	CB	5-11	185	Clemson
17. Julian Humphrey	Clear Lake (Houston, TX)	CB	6-1	185	Georgia
18. Terrance Brooks	Little Elm (Little Elm, TX)	CB	5-11	190	Texas
19. Keon Sabb	IMG Academy (Glassboro, NJ)	S	6-2	200	Michigan
20. Gentry Williams	Booker T. Washington (Tulsa, OK)	CB	6-0	170	Oklahoma
21. Earl Little Jr.	American Heritage (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	CB	6-0	175	Alabama
22. Marquis Groves-Killebrew	North Cobb (Acworth, GA)	CB	6-0	180	Texas A&M
23. Trequon Fegans	Thompson (Alabaster, AL)	CB	6-1	181	Alabama
24. Khamauri Rogers	Holmes County (Madison, MS)	CB	6-0	150	Miami (Fla.)
25. Bryan Allen Jr.	Aledo (Aledo, TX)	S	6-0	185	Texas
26. Laterrance Welch	Acadiana (Lafayette, LA)	CB	6-1	180	LSU
27. Robert Spears-Jennings	Broken Arrow (Broken Arrow, OK)	S	6-1	195	Oklahoma
28. Jalil Tucker	Lincoln (San Diego, CA)	CB	6-0	180	Oregon
29. Jahlil Florence	Lincoln (San Diego, CA)	CB	6-2	180	Oregon
30. Jaylon Guilbeau	Memorial (Port Arthur, TX)	CB	6-0	175	Texas
31. Davison Igbinosun	Union (Union, NJ)	CB	6-2	185	Ole Miss
32. Kamari Ramsey	Sierra Canyon (Chatsworth, CA)	S	6-0	200	UCLA
33. Zeke Berry	De La Salle (Concord, CA)	S	6-0	195	Michigan
34. JD Rhym	Valdosta (Valdosta, GA)	CB	6-1	170	Auburn
35. Chace Biddle	Garland (Garland, TX)	S	6-0	190	TCU
36. Austin Ausberry	University Lab (Baton Rouge, LA)	CB	6-0	195	Auburn
37. Bobby Taylor	Katy (Katy, TX)	CB	6-1	180	Texas A&M
38. Isaac Thompson	St. Louis University (Saint Louis, MO)	S	6-2	205	Missouri
39. Sherrod Covil Jr.	Oscar Smith (Chesapeake, VA)	S	6-0	185	Clemson
40. Jyaire Brown	Lakota West (West Chester, OH)	CB	6-0	178	Ohio State
41. Tayon Holloway	Green Run (Virginia Beach, VA)	CB	6-0	165	North Carolina
42. Jacolby Spells	American Heritage (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	CB	5-11	170	West Virginia
43. Jaden Mickey	Centennial (Corona, CA)	CB	6-0	175	Notre Dame
44. Keenan Nelson Jr.	St. Joseph's Prep (Philadelphia, PA)	S	6-1	200	South Carolina
45. Cristian Driver	Liberty Christian (Argyle, TX)	S	5-11	185	Penn State
46. Fabian Ross	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV)	CB	6-0	185	USC
47. Trevell Mullen	Coconut Creek (Pompano Beach, FL)	CB	5-11	170	Indiana
48. Austin Jordan	Ryan (Denton, TX)	S	6-0	190	Texas
49. Myles Rowser	Belleville (Detroit, MI)	S	6-09	185	Campbell
50. Jaeden Gould	Bergen Catholic (Oradell, NJ)	CB	6-2	190	Nebraska
51. Ephesians Prysock	Bishop Alemany (Mission Hills, CA)	CB	6-3	170	Arizona
52. Devin Moore	Naples (Naples, FL)	S	6-3	190	Florida
53. Tre Donaldson	Florida State Univ. School (Tallahassee, FL)	S	6-1	190	Auburn
54. Larry Turner-Gooden	Bishop Alemany (Mission Hills, CA)	S	6-0	179	Texas
55. Taylor Groves	East Robertson (Cross Plains, TN)	S	6-2	182	Ole Miss
56. Cam Miller	Trinity Christian Acad. (Jacksonville, FL)	CB	6-0	180	Penn State
57. Markeith Williams	Evans (Orlando, FL)	S	6-1	170	Miami (Fla.)
58. Cam Johnson	St. Frances Academy (Baltimore, MD)	CB	6-0	165	Virginia Tech
59. Jayden Rowe	Union (Tulsa, OK)	CB	6-3	210	Oklahoma
60. Trejon Williams	Jefferson (Portland, OR)	S	5-11	180	Oregon
61. JaCorey Thomas	Boone (Orlando, FL)	S	6-1	188	Georgia
62. Benjamin Morrison	Brophy Coll. Prep. (Phoenix, AZ)	CB	6-1	175	Notre Dame
63. JQ Hardaway	Central (Phenix City, AL)	S	6-2	190	Cincinnati
64. Kevin Winston Jr.	DeMatha Catholic (Hyattsville, MD)	S	6-1	190	Penn State
65. Sione Hale	St. John Bosco (Bellflower, CA)	S	6-2	190	Boston College
66. Nikai Martinez	Apopka (Apopka, FL)	CB	5-11	175	UCF
67. Jadais Richard	West Monroe (West Monroe, LA)	S	6-2	205	Vanderbilt
68. Jarred Kerr	Lexington (Lexington, TX)	S	6-0	185	Texas A&M
69. Jaylin Marshall	Western (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	S	6-3	190	Georgia Tech
70. Nick Cull	Seminole County (Donalsonville, GA)	CB	5-11	175	Ole Miss
71. Marcus Scott II	Conroe (Conroe, TX)	CB	6-2	170	Missouri
72. Jake Pope	Buford (Buford, GA)	S	6-1	190	Alabama
73. Anthony Rose	Miami Central (Miami, FL)	S	6-3	180	South Carolina
74. Jeremiah Caldwell	Belleville (Belleville, MI)	S	6-2	177	Louisville
75. Caleb Coley	Houston County (Warner Robins, GA)	CB	5-11	166	Michigan State

ATHLETES

1. Malachi Starks	Jefferson (Jefferson, GA)	ATH	6-1	200	Georgia
2. Isaiah Bond	Buford (Buford, GA)	ATH	5-11	175	Alabama
3. Kendrick Law	Captain Shreve (Shreveport, LA)	ATH	5-11	195	Alabama
4. Azareye'h Thomas	Niceville (Niceville, FL)	ATH	6-2	181	Florida State
5. Amari NiBlack	Lakewood (Clearwater, FL)	ATH	6-4	220	Alabama
6. Jaren Kanak	Hays (Hays, KS)	ATH	6-2	210	Oklahoma
7. Chris Graves	Bishop Verot (Fort Myers, FL)	ATH	6-1	175	Miami (Fla.)
8. Antonio Kite	Anniston (Anniston, AL)	ATH	6-1	180	Alabama
9. Mehki Flowers	Central Dauphin East (Harrisburg, PA)	ATH	6-1	190	Penn State
10. Maurion Horn	Broken Arrow (Broken Arrow, OK)	ATH	5-11	175	Texas Tech
11. Dillon Tatum	West Bloomfield (West Bloomfield, MI)	ATH	5-11	190	Michigan State
12. Alex Afari	Lakota West (West Chester, OH)	ATH	6-2	195	Kentucky
13. Jaden Mangham	Wylie E. Groves (Franklin, MI)	ATH	6-3	185	Michigan State
14. Kody Jones	Germantown (Germantown, TN)	ATH	5-11	175	Michigan
15. Octavian Smith Jr.	Paint Branch (Silver Spring, MD)	ATH	6-0	170	Maryland
16. Kye Stokes	Armwood (Seffner, FL)	ATH	6-2	185	Ohio State
17. Jordan Anthony	Tylertown (Tylertown, MS)	ATH	5-9	160	Kentucky
18. Omari Kelly	Hewitt-Trussville (Trussville, AL)	ATH	6-2	180	Auburn
19. Braylin Presley	Bixby (Bixby, OK)	ATH	5-7	155	Oklahoma St.
20. Clint Stephens	Inglewood (Inglewood, CA)	ATH	6-1	188	UCLA
21. Destin Wade	Summit (Spring Hill, TN)	ATH	6-3	205	Kentucky
22. Ja'Kobi Albert	Fairfield Prep. School (Fairfield, AL)	ATH	5-11	175	Kentucky
23. Rashod Dubinion	Cedar Grove (Ellenwood, GA)	ATH	5-10	185	Arkansas
24. Treyveon Longmire	Corbin (Corbin, KY)	ATH	6-2	170	Eastern Ky.
25. Mekhi Fox	Pasadena (Pasadena, CA)	ATH	6-1	190	Colorado State

RECRUITING 2022 BY CONFERENCE

ACC

NAME	SCHOOL (HOMETOWN)	POS	HT	WT	SCHOOL
1. Cade Klubnik	Westlake (Austin, TX)	QB	6-3	186	Clemson
2. Zach Rice	Liberty Christian Academy (Lynchburg, VA)	OT	6-6	282	North Carolina
3. Travis Shaw	Grimsley (Greensboro, NC)	DL	6-5	310	North Carolina
4. Jeadyn Lukus	Mauldin (Mauldin, SC)	CB	6-3	185	Clemson
5. Sam McCall	Lake Gibson (Lakeland, FL)	S	6-0	182	Florida State
6. Antonio Williams	Dutch Fork (Irmo, SC)	WR	6-0	180	Clemson
7. Cyrus Moss	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV)	EDGE	6-6	220	Miami (Fla.)
8. Andre Greene Jr.	St. Christopher's School (Richmond, VA)	WR	6-3	185	North Carolina
9. Toriano Pride Jr.	East St. Louis (East Saint Louis, IL)	CB	5-11	185	Clemson
10. Nyjalik Kelly	Dillard (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	DL	6-4	240	Miami (Fla.)
11. Azareye'h Thomas	Niceville (Niceville, FL)	ATH	6-2	181	Florida State
12. George Pettaway	Nansemond-Suffolk Acad. (Suffolk, VA)	RB	5-11	190	North Carolina
13. Jaleel Skinner	IMG Academy (Greer, SC)	TE	6-5	216	Miami (Fla.)
14. Trevonte' Citizen	Lake Charles Coll. Prep (Lake Charles, LA)	RB	6-0	217	Miami (Fla.)
15. Adam Randall	Myrtle Beach (Myrtle Beach, SC)	WR	6-3	215	Clemson
16. Khamauri Rogers	Holmes County (Madison, MS)	CB	6-0	150	Miami (Fla.)
17. Omarion Hampton	Cleveland (Clayton, NC)	RB	6-0	215	North Carolina
18. Sebastian Cheeks	Evanston Township (Evanston, IL)	LB	6-3	210	North Carolina
19. Julian Armella	St. Thomas Aquinas (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	OL	6-6	285	Florida State
20. Collin Sadler	Greenville (Greenville, SC)	OT	6-5	285	Clemson
21. Chris Graves	Bishop Verot (Fort Myers, FL)	ATH	6-1	175	Miami (Fla.)
22. AJ Duffy	IMG Academy (Murrieta, CA)	QB	6-2	223	Florida State
23. Popeye Williams	Westfield (Westfield, IN)	EDGE	6-3	230	Louisville
24. Wesley Bissainthe	Miami Central (Miami, FL)	LB	6-1	205	Miami (Fla.)
25. Tychaun Chapman	Landstown (Virginia Beach, VA)	WR	5-9	172	North Carolina
26. Malaki Hamrick	Shelby (Shelby, NC)	EDGE	6-4	205	North Carolina
27. Sherrod Covil Jr.	Oscar Smith (Chesapeake, VA)	S	6-0	185	Clemson
28. Tayon Holloway	Green Run (Virginia Beach, VA)	CB	6-0	165	North Carolina
29. Blake Miller	Strongsville (Strongsville, OH)	OT	6-6	315	Clemson
30. Caden Story	Lanett (Lanett, AL)	DL	6-3	282	Clemson
31. Gunner Givens	Lord Botetourt (Daleville, VA)	DL	6-5	270	Virginia Tech
32. TJ Dudley	Montgomery Cath. Prep. (Montgomery, AL)	LB	6-1	220	Clemson
33. Jacurri Brown	Lowndes (Valdosta, GA)	QB	6-4	205	Miami (Fla.)
34. Beau Atkinson	Leesville Road (Raleigh, NC)	EDGE	6-6	240	North Carolina
35. Michael Allen	J.H. Rose (Greenville, NC)	RB	5-9	203	NC State
36. Dakota Twitty	Thomas Jefferson Class Acad. (Mooresboro, NC)	WR	6-5	215	Virginia
37. Markeith Williams	Evans (Orlando, FL)	S	6-1	170	Miami (Fla.)
38. Cam Johnson	St. Frances Academy (Baltimore, MD)	CB	6-0	165	Virginia Tech
39. Vincent Anthony Jr.	C.E. Jordan (Durham, NC)	DL	6-5	232	Duke
40. Antonio Martin	Langston Hughes (Fairburn, GA)	RB	5-11	205	Georgia Tech

BIG 12

NAME	SCHOOL (HOMETOWN)	POS	HT	WT	SCHOOL
1. Devon Campbell	Bowie (Arlington, TX)	OL	6-3	310	Texas
2. Kelvin Banks Jr.	Summer Creek (Humble, TX)	OT	6-5	300	Texas
3. Terrance Brooks	Little Elm (Little Elm, TX)	CB	5-11	190	Texas
4. Neto Umeozulu	Allen (Allen, TX)	OL	6-4	285	Texas
5. Jordan Hudson	Garland (Garland, TX)	WR	6-1	180	TCU
6. Gentry Williams	Booker T. Washington (Tulsa, OK)	CB	6-0	170	Oklahoma
7. Gavin Sawchuk	Valor Christian (Littleton, CO)	RB	5-11	185	Oklahoma
8. J'mond Tapp	Ascension Catholic (Donaldsonville, LA)	EDGE	6-3	245	Texas
9. Jovantae Barnes	Desert Pines (Las Vegas, NV)	RB	6-0	190	Oklahoma
10. Justice Finkley	Hewitt-Trussville (Trussville, AL)	EDGE	6-2	255	Texas
11. Talyn Shettron	Santa Fe (Edmond, OK)	WR	6-3	185	Oklahoma St.
12. Bryan Allen Jr.	Aledo (Aledo, TX)	S	6-0	185	Texas
13. Robert Spears-Jennings	Broken Arrow (Broken Arrow, OK)	S	6-1	195	Oklahoma
14. Brenen Thompson	Spearman (Spearman, TX)	WR	5-10	165	Texas
15. Jake Taylor	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV)	OT	6-6	290	Oklahoma
16. Jaren Kanak	Hays (Hays, KS)	ATH	6-2	210	Oklahoma
17. Jaylon Guilbeau	Memorial (Port Arthur, TX)	CB	6-0	175	Texas
18. Kobie McKinzie	Lubbock-Cooper (Lubbock, TX)	LB	6-2	245	Oklahoma
19. Nick Evers	Flower Mound (Flower Mound, TX)	QB	6-3	188	Oklahoma
20. Jaray Bledsoe	Marlin (Marlin, TX)	DL	6-4	270	Texas
21. Maalik Murphy	Juniper Serra (Gardena, CA)	QB	6-5	225	Texas
22. Jayden Gibson	West Orange (Winter Garden, FL)	WR	6-5	185	Oklahoma
23. Chace Biddle	Garland (Garland, TX)	S	6-0	190	TCU
24. Jaydon Blue	Klein Cain (Houston, TX)	RB	6-0	205	Texas
25. Armani Winfield	Lewisville (Lewisville, TX)	WR	6-2	180	Baylor
26. Jacolby Spells	American Heritage (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	CB	5-11	170	West Virginia
27. Maurion Horn	Broken Arrow (Broken Arrow, OK)	ATH	5-11	175	Texas Tech
28. Nic Anderson	Katy (Katy, TX)	WR	6-4	195	Oklahoma
29. Kristopher Ross	North Shore (Houston, TX)	DL	6-3	280	Texas
30. Austin Jordan	Ryan (Denton, TX)	S	6-0	190	Texas
31. Jacob Sexton	Deer Creek (Edmond, OK)	OT	6-5	285	Oklahoma
32. DJ Allen	Gladewater (Gladewater, TX)	WR	5-11	190	TCU
33. Ollie Gordon	Trinity (Euless, TX)	RB	6-1	210	Oklahoma St.
34. Gracen Halton	St. Augustine (San Diego, CA)	DL	6-3	270	Oklahoma
35. Kip Lewis	Carthage (Carthage, TX)	LB	6-1	200	Oklahoma
36. Kaian Roberts-Day	Festus (Festus, MO)	EDGE	6-3	240	Baylor
37. Larry Turner-Gooden	Bishop Alemany (Mission Hills, CA)	S	6-0	179	Texas
38. Nicco Marchiol	Hamilton (Chandler, AZ)	QB	6-2	216	West Virginia
39. Malik Agbo	Todd Beamer (Federal Way, WA)	OT	6-6	320	Texas
40. Hunter Deyo	Lewis Central (Council Bluffs, IA)	DL	6-3	270	Iowa State

BIG TEN

1. C.J. Hicks	Archbishop Alter (Dayton, OH)	LB	6-3	215	Ohio State
2. Sonny Styles	Pickerington Central (Pickerington, OH)	S	6-4	215	Ohio State
3. Will Johnson	Grosse Point South (Grosse Point, MI)	CB	6-3	190	Michigan
4. Dani Dennis-Sutton	McDonogh School (Owings Mills, MD)	DL	6-5	250	Penn State
5. Nick Singleton	Governor Mifflin (Reading, PA)	RB	6-0	210	Penn State
6. Drew Allar	Medina (Medina, OH)	QB	6-5	232	Penn State
7. Devin Brown	Corner Canyon (Draper, UT)	QB	6-3	196	Ohio State
8. Derrick Moore	St. Frances Academy (Baltimore, MD)	DL	6-4	250	Michigan
9. Xavier Nwankpa	Southeast Polk (Altoona, IA)	S	6-2	200	Iowa
10. Kaden Saunders	Westerville South (Westerville, OH)	WR	5-10	172	Penn State
11. Kenyatta Jackson Jr.	Chaminade-Madonna Prep (Hollywood, FL)	EDGE	6-5	235	Ohio State
12. Omari Abor	Duncanville (Duncanville, TX)	EDGE	6-4	240	Ohio State
13. Dasan McCullough	Bloomington South (Bloomington, IN)	EDGE	6-5	235	Indiana
14. Kaleb Brown	St. Rita (Chicago, IL)	WR	5-11	195	Ohio State
15. Keon Sabb	IMG Academy (Glassboro, NJ)	S	6-2	200	Michigan
16. Joe Brunner	Whitefish Bay (Milwaukee, WI)	OT	6-6	300	Wisconsin
17. Kylon Grayes	Chandler (Chandler, AZ)	WR	5-11	170	Ohio State
18. Gabe Powers	Marysville (Marysville, OH)	LB	6-4	230	Ohio State
19. Tegra Tshabola	Lakota West (West Chester, OH)	OT	6-5	344	Ohio State
20. Jaishawn Barham	St. Frances Academy (District Hts., MD)	LB	6-3	230	Maryland
21. Drew Shelton	Downingtown West (Downingtown, PA)	OT	6-5	290	Penn State
22. Caden Curry	Center Grove (Greenwood, IN)	EDGE	6-3	240	Ohio State
23. Aaron Graves	Southeast Valley (Gowrie, IA)	DL	6-5	260	Iowa
24. Hero Kanu	Santa Margarita Cath. (Rancho S.M., CA)	DL	6-5	293	Ohio State
25. Caleb Burton	Lake Travis (Austin, TX)	WR	6-0	165	Ohio State
26. Tyler Morris	Nazareth Academy (Bolingbrook, IL)	WR	6-0	175	Michigan
27. Darrius Clemons	Westview (Portland, OR)	WR	6-3	205	Michigan
28. Kojo Antwi	Lambert (Suwanee, GA)	WR	6-0	190	Ohio State
29. Kaytron Allen	IMG Academy (Norfolk, VA)	RB	5-11	220	Penn State
30. Zeke Berry	De La Salle (Concord, CA)	S	6-0	195	Michigan
31. Brady Allen	Gibson Southern (Fort Branch, IN)	QB	6-5	210	Purdue
32. Carson Hinzman	Saint Croix Central (Hammond, WI)	OL	6-4	280	Ohio State
33. Moses Walker	Erasmus Hall (Brooklyn, NY)	LB	6-2	220	Rutgers
34. Mehki Flowers	Central Dauphin East (Harrisburg, PA)	ATH	6-1	190	Penn State
35. Alex VanSumeren	Garber (Essexville, MI)	DL	6-3	300	Michigan State
36. Jyaire Brown	Lakota West (West Chester, OH)	CB	6-0	178	Ohio State
37. Jacob Allen	Hun School (Princeton, NJ)	OL	6-6	270	Rutgers
38. Nic Caraway	Bryan (Bryan, TX)	DL	6-3	258	Purdue
39. Shaleak Knotts	Monroe (Monroe, NC)	WR	6-1	184	Maryland
40. Jimmy Rolder	Marist (Chicago, IL)	LB	6-2	220	Michigan

PAC-12

NAME	SCHOOL (HOMETOWN)	POS	HT	WT	SCHOOL
1. Domani Jackson	Mater Dei (Santa Ana, CA)	CB	6-1	185	USC
2. Josh Conerly Jr.	Rainier Beach (Seattle, WA)	OT	6-5	283	Oregon
3. Raleek Brown	Mater Dei (Santa Ana, CA)	RB	5-8	185	USC
4. Tetairoa McMillan	Servite (Anaheim, CA)	WR	6-4	185	Arizona
5. Zion Branch	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV)	S	6-2	195	USC
6. David Bailey	Mater Dei (Santa Ana, CA)	EDGE	6-3	220	Stanford
7. CJ Williams	Mater Dei (Santa Ana, CA)	WR	6-2	193	USC
8. Lander Barton	Brighton (Salt Lake City, UT)	LB	6-4	220	Utah
9. Devon Jackson	Burke (Omaha, NE)	LB	6-2	200	Oregon
10. Jalil Tucker	Lincoln (San Diego, CA)	CB	6-0	180	Oregon
11. Kyler Kasper	Williams Field (Gilbert, AZ)	WR	6-5	195	Oregon
12. Ernest Cooper IV	Martin (Arlington, TX)	DL	6-4	235	Stanford
13. Jahlil Florence	Lincoln (San Diego, CA)	CB	6-2	180	Oregon
14. Kamari Ramsey	Sierra Canyon (Chatsworth, CA)	S	6-0	200	UCLA
15. Dave Iuli	Puyallup (Puyallup, WA)	OL	6-5	315	Oregon
16. Jordan James	Oakland (Murfreesboro, TN)	RB	5-10	205	Oregon
17. Rayshon Luke	St. John Bosco (Bellflower, CA)	RB	5-8	175	Arizona
18. Keyan Burnett	Servite (Anaheim, CA)	TE	6-4	225	Arizona
19. Nate Johnson	Clovis (Clovis, CA)	QB	6-2	183	Utah
20. Fabian Ross	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV)	CB	6-0	185	USC
21. Jack Pedersen	Vista Murrieta (Murrieta CA)	TE	6-4	235	UCLA
22. Tevin White	North Stafford (Stafford, VA)	RB	6-1	200	Arizona State
23. Ryan Otton	Tumwater (Olympia, WA)	TE	6-6	224	Washington
24. Ephesians Prysock	Bishop Alemany (Mission Hills, CA)	CB	6-3	170	Arizona
25. Tevarus Tafiti	Punahou (Honolulu, HI)	LB	6-3	222	Stanford
26. Fisher Anderson	Franklin (Franklin, TN)	OT	6-7	270	Stanford
27. Jadyn Marshall	St. Mary's (Stockton, CA)	WR	6-1	180	UCLA
28. Justyn Martin	Inglewood (Inglewood, CA)	QB	6-4	210	UCLA
29. Sam Roush	Lipscomb Academy (Nashville, TN)	TE	6-5	225	Stanford
30. Carsen Ryan	American Fork (American Fork, UT)	TE	6-4	235	UCLA
31. Jaydn Ott	Norco (Norco, CA)	RB	6-0	196	California
32. Arlen Harris Jr.	Lutheran of St. Charles Co. (Saint Peters, MO)	RB	5-11	189	Stanford
33. Lucas Heyer	Hill Murray School (Saint Paul, MN)	OT	6-5	307	Stanford
34. Trejon Williams	Jefferson (Portland, OR)	S	5-11	180	Oregon
35. Sterling Lane II	Oaks Christian (Westlake Village, CA)	LB	6-4	235	Arizona
36. Harrison Taggart	Corner Canyon (Draper, UT)	LB	6-2	200	Oregon
37. Jaylon Glover	Lake Gibson (Lakeland, FL)	RB	5-7	205	Utah
38. Clint Stephens	Inglewood (Inglewood, CA)	ATH	6-1	188	UCLA
39. Ben Roberts	East (Salt Lake City, UT)	DL	6-4	290	Oregon
40. Khamari Terrell	Shoemaker (Killeen, TX)	CB	6-1	180	Oregon

SEC

NAME	SCHOOL (HOMETOWN)	POS	HT	WT	SCHOOL
1. Walter Nolen	Powell (Powell, TN)	DL	6-4	325	Texas A&M
2. Luther Burden III	East St. Louis (East Saint Louis, IL)	WR	6-0	200	Missouri
3. Mykel Williams	Hardaway (Columbus, GA)	DL	6-5	265	Georgia
4. Harold Perkins	Cy Park (Cypress, TX)	LB	6-3	210	LSU
5. Shemar Stewart	Monsignor Pace (Opa Locka, FL)	DL	6-6	272	Texas A&M
6. Evan Stewart	Liberty (Frisco, TX)	WR	6-0	175	Texas A&M
7. Gabriel Brownlow-Dindy	Lakeland (Lakeland, FL)	DL	6-3	280	Texas A&M
8. Jeremiah Alexander	Thompson (Alabaster, AL)	EDGE	6-2	235	Alabama
9. Lebbeus Overton	Milton (Alpharetta, GA)	DL	6-5	265	Texas A&M
10. Malaki Starks	Jefferson (Jefferson, GA)	ATH	6-1	200	Georgia
11. Jihaad Campbell	IMG Academy (Erial, NJ)	EDGE	6-3	215	Alabama
12. Conner Weigman	Bridgeland (Cypress, TX)	QB	6-2	208	Texas A&M
13. Denver Harris	North Shore (Houston, TX)	CB	6-1	180	Texas A&M
14. Marvin Jones Jr.	American Heritage (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	EDGE	6-5	245	Georgia
15. Chris Marshall	Fort Bend Marshall (Missouri City, TX)	WR	6-3	195	Texas A&M
16. Ty Simpson	Westview (Martin, TN)	QB	6-2	200	Alabama
17. Jaheim Singletary	Riverside (Jacksonville, FL)	CB	6-2	170	Georgia
18. Daylen Everette	IMG Academy (Norfolk, VA)	CB	6-1	185	Georgia
19. Aaron Anderson	Edna Karr (New Orleans, LA)	WR	5-9	185	Alabama
20. Will Campbell	Neville (Monroe, LA)	OT	6-6	300	LSU
21. Elijah Pritchett	Carver (Columbus, GA)	OT	6-6	280	Alabama
22. Kiyaunta Goodwin	Charlestown (Louisville, KY)	OT	6-8	340	Kentucky
23. Jacoby Mathews	Ponchatoula (Ponchatoula, LA)	S	6-2	193	Texas A&M
24. Emmanuel Henderson	Geneva County (Hartford, AL)	RB	6-1	185	Alabama
25. Walker Howard	St. Thomas More (Lafayette, LA)	QB	6-1	195	LSU
26. Kamari Wilson	IMG Academy (Fort Pierce, FL)	S	6-0	200	Florida
27. Earnest Greene III	St. John Bosco (Los Angeles, CA)	OL	6-5	330	Georgia
28. Jalon Walker	Salisbury (Salisbury, NC)	LB	6-2	220	Georgia
29. Enai White	Imhotep Institute (Philadelphia, PA)	EDGE	6-5	230	Texas A&M
30. Bear Alexander	IMG Academy (Denton, TX)	DL	6-3	325	Georgia
31. Isaiah Bond	Buford (Buford, GA)	ATH	5-11	175	Alabama
32. Shazz Preston	St. James (Saint James, LA)	WR	6-0	190	Alabama
33. Tyler Booker	IMG Academy (New Haven, CT)	OT	6-5	325	Alabama
34. Anthony Lucas	Chaparral (Scottsdale, AZ)	DL	6-5	275	Texas A&M
35. Branson Robinson	Germantown (Madison, MS)	RB	5-10	220	Georgia
36. Kam Dewberry	Atascocita (Humble, TX)	OL	6-4	313	Texas A&M
37. Khurtiss Perry	Pike Road (Pike Road, AL)	DL	6-2	265	Alabama
38. Shemar Jones	Faith Academy (Mobile, AL)	LB	6-2	212	Florida
39. Smoke Bouie	Bainbrdige (Bainbridge, GA)	S	5-11	185	Texas A&M
40. PJ Williams	Dickinson (Dickinson, TX)	OT	6-4	265	Texas A&M

AAC

NAME	SCHOOL (HOMETOWN)	POS	HT	WT	SCHOOL
1. Matthew Golden	Klein Cain (Houston, TX)	WR	6-0	190	Houston
2. Mario Eugenio	Gaither (Clearwater, FL)	EDGE	6-3	232	Cincinnati
3. JQ Hardaway	Central (Phenix City, AL)	S	6-2	190	Cincinnati
4. RJ Maryland	Southlake Carroll (Southlake, TX)	TE	6-3	205	SMU
5. Derrick Shepard	Archbishop Alter (Dayton, OH)	DL	6-3	295	Cincinnati
6. Joshua White	Cedar Grove (Decatur, GA)	DL	6-4	275	Memphis
7. Quan Lee	F.W. Buccholz (Gainesville, FL)	WR	6-0	175	UCF
8. Demetrius Hunter	West Orange-Stark (Orange, TX)	OL	6-2	315	Houston
9. Ja'Cari Henderson	Seminole (Sanford, FL)	CB	6-0	160	UCF
10. Keahnist Thompson	Lakeland (Lakeland, FL)	DL	6-3	255	UCF

MAC

NAME	SCHOOL (HOMETOWN)	POS	HT	WT	SCHOOL
1. Devin Grant	Holy Cross (Flushing, NY)	ATH	6-3	185	Buffalo
2. Kaden Cobb	Fenwick (Naperville, IL)	QB	6-3	180	Ball State
3. Bert Emanuel Jr.	Ridge Point (Missouri City, TX)	QB	6-3	195	Central Mich.
4. Devin Kargman	Woodrow Wilson (Camden, NJ)	QB	6-3	220	Kent State
5. Jaiden Credle	Carver (Columbus, GA)	RB	6-0	190	No. Illinois
6. Tag Bonnema	Zeeland East (Zeeland, MI)	LB	6-4	228	Western Mich.
7. Davonte Miles	River Rouge (River Rouge, MI)	DL	6-4	275	Bowling Green
8. Ka'Marii Landers	Fordson (Dearborn, MI)	OL	6-5	300	Akron
9. Nasir Bowers	Lakeland (Lakeland, FL)	CB	5-9	168	Toledo
10. Jeffrey Simmons	Fishers (Fishers, IN)	TE	6-6	203	Miami (Ohio)

C-USA

NAME	SCHOOL (HOMETOWN)	POS	HT	WT	SCHOOL
1. DeAnthony Gatson	Newton (Newton, TX)	RB	5-10	198	Louisiana Tech
2. Owen Pewee	Cy Park (Cypress, TX)	LB	6-3	187	UTSA
3. Jhamal Shelby Jr.	St. Augustine (New Orleans, LA)	CB	6-2	180	Louisiana Tech
4. Caden Veitkamp	South Warren (Bowling Green, KY)	QB	6-5	215	WKU
5. Jace Wilson	Guyer (Denton, TX)	WR	6-4	185	UTSA
6. Darius Thomas	Miramar (Hollywood, FL)	S	6-2	190	WKU
7. Cam Robertson	Plano (Plano, TX)	EDGE	6-4	230	North Texas
8. Kaleb Brown	LBJ (Austin, TX)	LB	6-0	200	UTSA
9. Jaylen Ward	Thompson (Alabaster, AL)	WR	6-2	190	Middle Tenn.
10. Jayshon Platt	Venice (Venice, FL)	WR	6-0	177	FAU

MOUNTAIN WEST

NAME	SCHOOL (HOMETOWN)	POS	HT	WT	SCHOOL
1. Deshawn Woods	Central (Omaha, NE)	OL	6-4	270	Wyoming
2. Dishawn Misa	Eastside Catholic (Sammamish, WA)	LB	6-3	220	Boise State
3. Mekhi Fox	Pasadena (Pasadena, CA)	ATH	6-1	190	Colorado State
4. Lucky Sutton	Cathedral Catholic (San Diego, CA)	RB	6-1	205	San Diego St.
5. Jalen Moss	Menlo-Atherton (Menlo Park, CA)	WR	6-0	155	Fresno State
6. Randy Master	Yates (Houston, TX)	WR	6-1	172	UNLV
7. Joshua Wood	Graham-Kapowsin (Graham, WA)	QB	6-3	185	Fresno State
8. Hassan Mahasin	Junipero Serra (San Mateo, CA)	ATH	5-10	175	San Diego St.
9. Jayden Maiava	Liberty (Henderson, NV)	QB	6-4	205	UNLV
10. Austin Terry	Tumwater (Olympia, WA)	TE	6-5	230	Boise State

SUN BELT

NAME	SCHOOL (HOMETOWN)	POS	HT	WT	SCHOOL
1. Terrance Gibbs	Winter Park (Winter Park, FL)	RB	6-0	190	Ga. Southern
2. Santana Hopper	Shelby (Shelby, NC)	DL	6-1	280	Appalachian St.
3. Lorenzell Dubose	Neville (Monroe, LA)	CB	6-0	175	Louisiana
4. Peter Kikwata	Northwest (Germantown, MD)	WR	6-1	170	ODU
5. RJ Moss	Biloxi (Biloxi, MS)	DL	6-3	245	South Alabama
6. De'Andre Coleman	Hueytown (Hueytown, AL)	WR	6-2	200	Coastal Car.
7. Matthew McDoom	West Orange (Winter Garden, FL)	ATH	5-8	154	Coastal Car.
8. Kallep Edwards	West St. John (Edgard, LA)	LB	6-0	221	Louisiana
9. Dainsus Miller	Creekside (Fairburn, GA)	CB	5-11	180	Marshall
10. Miller McCrumby	Mount Pleasant (Mount Pleasant, TX)	TE	6-4	205	Arkansas St.

AAC PREVIEW

PREDICTED ORDER OF FINISH

1	CINCINNATI **BEARCATS**	11-2, 7-1
2	HOUSTON **COUGARS**	9-4, 6-2
3	UCF **KNIGHTS**	8-4, 5-3
4	SMU **MUSTANGS**	7-5, 5-3
5	EAST CAROLINA **PIRATES**	7-5, 5-3
6	MEMPHIS **TIGERS**	7-5, 4-4
7	TULANE **GREEN WAVE**	6-6, 3-5
8	TULSA **GOLDEN HURRICANE**	6-6, 3-5
9	USF **BULLS**	4-8, 3-5
10	NAVY **MIDSHIPMEN**	4-8, 2-6
11	TEMPLE **OWLS**	3-9, 1-7

Games to Watch

Cincinnati at Arkansas, Sept. 3
Memphis at Mississippi State, Sept. 3
Louisville at UCF, Sept. 9
Houston at Texas Tech, Sept. 10
TCU at SMU, Sept. 24
Indiana at Cincinnati, Sept. 24
SMU at UCF, Oct. 1
Cincinnati at SMU, Oct. 22
UCF at East Carolina, Oct. 22
Cincinnati at UCF, Oct. 29
Houston at SMU, Nov. 5
UCF at USF, Nov. 26

DESHAWN PACE

AAC Championship:
Cincinnati over Houston

Recruiting by School

1. Cincinnati
2. Houston
3. UCF
4. Memphis
5. Tulane
6. SMU
7. East Carolina
8. USF
9. Temple
10. Tulsa
11. Navy

Kevin Schultz/Cal Sport Media via AP Images

ALL-AAC TEAM

FIRST-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	**Clayton Tune**	Sr.	Houston
RB	**Keaton Mitchell**	So.	East Carolina
RB	**Tyjae Spears**	So.	Tulane
AP	**Ryan O'Keefe**	Sr.	UCF
WR	**Nathaniel Dell**	Jr.	Houston
WR	**Rashee Rice**	Sr.	SMU
TE	**Ryan Jones**	Sr.	East Carolina
C	**Jake Renfro**	Jr.	Cincinnati
OL	**Dylan O'Quinn**	Sr.	Cincinnati
OL	**Lorenz Metz**	Sr.	Cincinnati
OL	**Patrick Paul**	So.	Houston
OL	**Sincere Haynesworth**	Jr.	Tulane

FIRST-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	**Derek Parish**	Sr.	Houston
DL	**Elijah Chatman**	Sr.	SMU
DL	**Malik Vann**	Sr.	Cincinnati
DL	**Anthony Goodlow**	Sr.	Tulsa
DL	**Darius Hodges**	So.	Tulane
LB	**Donavan Mutin**	Sr.	Houston
LB	**Antonio Grier**	Sr.	USF
LB	**Deshawn Pace**	Jr.	Cincinnati
CB	**Arquon Bush**	Sr.	Cincinnati
CB	**Davonte Brown**	Jr.	UCF
S	**Gervarrius Owens**	Sr.	Houston
S	**Quindell Johnson**	Sr.	Memphis

FIRST-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	**Zack Long**	Sr.	Tulsa
KR	**Brian Battie**	So.	USF
P	**Lachlan Wilson**	Jr.	Tulsa
PR	**Ryan Montgomery**	Sr.	Cincinnati

SECOND-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	**Tanner Mordecai**	Sr.	SMU
RB	**Isaiah Bowser**	Sr.	UCF
RB	**Jaren Mangham**	Sr.	USF
AP	**Ta'Zhawn Henry**	Sr.	Houston
WR	**JuanCarlos Santana**	Sr.	Tulsa
WR	**Xavier Weaver**	Jr.	USF
TE	**Josh Whyle**	Sr.	Cincinnati
C	**Matthew Lee**	Jr.	UCF
OL	**Demetris Harris**	Sr.	USF
OL	**Lokahi Pauole**	Sr.	UCF
OL	**Gerard Wheeler**	Sr.	Tulsa
OL	**Donovan Jennings**	Sr.	USF

SECOND-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	**Tre'mon Morris-Brash**	Sr.	UCF
DL	**D'Anthony Jones**	Sr.	Houston
DL	**DeVere Levelston**	Sr.	SMU
DL	**Ricky Barber**	Jr.	UCF
DL	**Jowon Briggs**	Jr.	Cincinnati
LB	**Justin Wright**	Sr.	Tulsa
LB	**Nick Anderson**	Sr.	Tulane
LB	**Xavier Cullens**	Sr.	Memphis
CB	**Malik Fleming**	Jr.	East Carolina
CB	**Macon Clark**	Sr.	Tulane
S	**Divaad Wilson**	Sr.	UCF
S	**Kendarin Ray**	Sr.	Tulsa

SECOND-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	**Owen Daffer**	So.	East Carolina
KR	**Bryan Massey**	Jr.	SMU
P	**Joe Doyle**	Sr.	Memphis
PR	**Jha'Quan Jackson**	Jr.	Tulane

THIRD-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	**Michael Pratt**	So.	Tulane
RB	**Deneric Prince**	Sr.	Tulsa
RB	**Corey Kiner**	So.	Cincinnati
AP	**Tre Siggers**	Sr.	SMU
WR	**Kobe Hudson**	Jr.	UCF
WR	**Tre Tucker**	Sr.	Cincinnati
TE	**Tyrick James**	Sr.	Tulane
C	**Brad Cecil**	Sr.	USF
OL	**Isaac Moore**	Sr.	Temple
OL	**Noah Henderson**	Jr.	East Carolina
OL	**Kip Frankland**	Sr.	Navy
OL	**Jaylon Thomas**	Sr.	SMU

THIRD-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	**Immanuel Hickman**	So.	East Carolina
DL	**Jaylon Allen**	Sr.	Memphis
DL	**Donald Berniard Jr.**	Jr.	Navy
DL	**Jabari Taylor**	Sr.	Cincinnati
LB	**Turner Coxe**	Sr.	SMU
LB	**Ty Van Fossen**	Sr.	Cincinnati
LB	**Dorian Williams**	Jr.	Tulane
LB	**Jeremy Lewis**	Jr.	East Carolina
CB	**Jadon Canady**	So.	Tulane
CB	**Corey Thornton**	Jr.	UCF
S	**Rodney Owens**	Sr.	Memphis
S	**Ja'von Hicks**	Sr.	Cincinnati

THIRD-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	**Spencer Shrader**	Jr.	USF
KR	**Tre Tucker**	Sr.	Cincinnati
P	**Laine Wilkins**	So.	Houston
PR	**Xavier Weaver**	Jr.	USF

2022 BOWL PROJECTIONS

Armed Forces Bowl
Houston vs. Iowa State

Boca Raton Bowl
UCF vs. Coastal Carolina

Fenway Bowl
SMU vs. Syracuse

Independence Bowl
Tulane vs. Army

Military Bowl
East Carolina vs. Virginia Tech

Myrtle Beach Bowl
Memphis vs. Georgia State

Cotton Bowl
Cincinnati vs. USC

2021 STANDINGS

	AAC	Overall
Cincinnati	8-0	13-1
Houston	8-0	12-2
UCF	5-3	9-4
East Carolina	5-3	7-5
Tulsa	5-3	7-6
SMU	4-4	8-4
Memphis	3-5	6-6
Navy	3-5	4-8
Tulane	1-7	2-10
USF	1-7	2-10
Temple	1-7	3-9

2021 BOWL RESULTS

Myrtle Beach Bowl
Tulsa 30, Old Dominion 17

Gasparilla Bowl
UCF 29, Florida 17

Birmingham Bowl
Houston 17, Auburn 13

Cotton Bowl (CFP Semifinal)
Alabama 27, Cincinnati 6

Hawaii Bowl
Memphis vs. Hawaii (canceled)

Military Bowl
East Carolina vs. Boston Coll. (canceled)

Fenway Bowl
SMU vs. Virginia (canceled)

CINCINNATI BEARCATS

National Forecast: 15 • AAC Prediction: 1 • Projected Record: 11-2, 7-1 AAC

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	at Arkansas
Sept. 10	Kennesaw State
Sept. 17	Miami (Ohio) #
Sept. 24	Indiana
Oct. 1	at Tulsa
Oct. 8	USF
Oct. 22	at SMU
Oct. 29	at UCF
Nov. 5	Navy
Nov. 11	East Carolina
Nov. 19	at Temple
Nov. 26	Tulane

#Paul Brown Stadium

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 13-1, 8-0 AAC

Sept. 4	Miami (Ohio)	W	49-14
Sept. 11	Murray State	W	42-7
Sept. 18	at Indiana	W	38-24
Oct. 2	at Notre Dame	W	24-13
Oct. 8	Temple	W	52-3
Oct. 16	UCF	W	56-21
Oct. 23	at Navy	W	27-20
Oct. 30	at Tulane	W	31-12
Nov. 6	Tulsa	W	28-20
Nov. 12	at USF	W	45-28
Nov. 20	SMU	W	48-14
Nov. 26	at East Carolina	W	35-13
Dec. 4	Houston #	W	35-20
Dec. 31	vs. Alabama %	L	6-27

#AAC Championship %Cotton Bowl: CFB Playoff Semifinal

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	36.4 ppg	2	13
Rushing	173.3 ypg	4	56
Passing	241.2 ypg	6	58
Total	414.5 ypg	5	58

DEFENSE	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	16.9 ppg	1	5
Rushing	149.1 ypg	5	62
Passing	169.2 ypg	1	2
Total	318.4 ypg	2	10

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
+12	+0.86	1	5

STAT CORNER

33

Cincinnati allowed just 33 plays of 20-plus yards, third fewest in the FBS.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Evan Prater, 11-5-38-1, 2 TDs
Rushing: Ryan Montgomery, 46 att., 312 yds., 3 TDs
Receiving: Tre Tucker, 34 rec., 426 yds., 2 TDs
Tackles: Deshawn Pace, 94
Sacks: Malik Vann, 3.5
Interceptions: Deshawn Pace, 4

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Luke Fickell
Record at School: 48-15 (5 years)
Career Record: 54-22 (6 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Gino Guidugli
Defensive Coordinator: Mike Tressel
Location: Cincinnati, OH
Stadium: Nippert Stadium (37,978)

OFFENSE Out is two-time AAC Offensive Player of the Year Desmond Ridder, and in is a full-on quarterback competition between Eastern Michigan transfer and one-time Bearcat Ben Bryant and highly touted recruit Evan Prater. In 2021, Bryant started 11 of 13 games for EMU, throwing for 3,121 yards and 14 TDs. Prater saw limited action for the Bearcats but displayed a playmaking ability that will be tough to contain should he win the job. The battle should go all the way to the opener at Arkansas.

The new quarterback will benefit greatly from an offensive line that returns all five starters, three of whom — center Jake Renfro, guard Lorenz Metz and tackle Dylan O'Quinn — were 2021 first-team All-AAC selections.

The backfield should remain strong even with the departure of star Jerome Ford. The Bearcats received a late transfer in LSU RB Corey Kiner, a former four-star recruit. Veterans Ryan Montgomery, Charles McClelland and Ethan Wright and sophomore Myles Montgomery round out a very deep and talented group.

Tight ends Josh Whyle and Leonard Taylor combined for 54 catches, 600 yards and 10 TDs in 2021 and will be primary targets for the UC offense. Returning receivers Tyler Scott, Tre Tucker and Jadon Thompson give the Bearcats speed and explosiveness in the passing game.

DEFENSE With at least six key members off to the NFL, this unit will undergo a major overhaul in 2022.

The defensive line should remain a strength as veterans Malik Vann and Jabari Taylor are joined by Jowon Briggs in a three-man front. The trio combined for 8.5 sacks last season and will bring an experienced presence to a young defense. First-team All-MAC linebacker Ivan Pace transfers in from Miami (Ohio) and joins his brother Deshawn to bolster a talented room. Deshawn burst onto the scene last year with 94 tackles and four interceptions. Mainstays Wilson Huber and Ty Van Fossen will be joined by the uber-athletic Jaheim Thomas.

The secondary must replace Ahmad "Sauce" Gardner, Coby Bryant and Bryan Cook. Senior Arquon Bush is experienced and will be leaned on heavily to bring along corners Justin Harris, Todd Bumphis and Sammy Anderson Jr. Ja'von Hicks will be in his second season starting at safety and will also be looked to for leadership of a group that will be learning on the fly.

SPECIALISTS Punter Mason Fletcher had a very strong rookie campaign. The placekicking should get a boost from Delaware transfer Ryan Coe, who was 14-of-17 on field goals in 2021 and sports a big leg. Punt returner Montgomery and kickoff return man Tucker are also back for a special teams unit that is consistently one of the best in the nation.

FINAL ANALYSIS Given the production and experience the Bearcats must replace, a return to the College Football Playoff seems unlikely. That said, the talent level is still very high, and if the winner of the QB competition can be a steady hand, there is no reason this team can't compete for a third straight AAC title.

ARQUON BUSH

Joe Robbins/Icon Sportswire via Getty Images

> "Luke [Fickell] has the program to a point where they're going to be down while they're finding leaders, but they're still going to be competitive and capable of winning the league."
>
> —An opposing AAC assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Mario Eugenio, Edge, Tampa, FL	★★★★
2	JQ Hardaway, S, Phenix City, AL	★★★★
3	Derrick Shepard, DL, Dayton, OH	★★★
4	Oliver Bridges, CB, Potomac, MD	★★★
5	Jojo Bermudez, WR, Egg Harbor City, NJ	★★★
6	Stephan Byrd, RB, Canal Winchester, OH	★★★
7	Luther Richesson, QB, Nashville, TN	★★★
8	Marcus Peterson, TE, Lake City, FL	★★★
9	Ethan Green, OT, Fremont, OH	★★★
10	CJ Doggette Jr., Pickerington, OH	★★★

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

WR	1	Tre Tucker (Sr.)	19	Will Pauling (So.)
WR	20	Jadon Thompson (Jr.)	84	Nick Mardner (Sr.)
WR	21	Tyler Scott (Jr.)	80	Chris Scott (So.)
LT	**72**	**James Tunstall (Sr.)**	75	John Williams (So.)
LG	**74**	**Jeremy Cooper (Sr.)**	55	Mao Glynn II (So.)
C	**56**	**Jake Renfro (Jr.)**	53	Gavin Gerhardt (So.)
RG	**51**	**Lorenz Metz (Sr.)**	60	Joe Huber (So.)
RT	**50**	**Dylan O'Quinn (Sr.)**	69	Cam Jones (Jr.)
TE	**81**	**Josh Whyle (Sr.)**	**11**	**Leonard Taylor (Sr.)**
QB	6	Ben Bryant (Sr.)	3	Evan Prater (So.)
RB		Corey Kiner (So.)	22	Ryan Montgomery (Sr.)

DEFENSE (4)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	90	Jabari Taylor (Sr.)	97	Eric Phillips (Jr.)
DT	18	Jowon Briggs (Jr.)	58	Dontay Corleone (Fr.)
DE	**42**	**Malik Vann (Sr.)**	34	Justin Wodtly (So.)
SLB	20	Deshawn Pace (Jr.)	**13**	**Ty Van Fossen (Sr.)**
MLB	24	Jaheim Thomas (So.)	49	Jack Dingle (Fr.)
WLB	2	Wilson Huber (Sr.)	17	Ivan Pace (Sr.)
CB	15	Taj Ward (Sr.)	5	Ja'quan Sheppard (Sr.)
CB	4	Justin Harris (Sr.)	12	Todd Bumphis (So.)
NB	**9**	**Arquon Bush (Sr.)**	11	Sammy Anderson Jr. (Jr.)
S	29	Jacob Dingle (Sr.)	27	Armorion Smith (So.)
S	**3**	**Ja'von Hicks (Sr.)**	10	Bryon Threats (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K		Ryan Coe (Jr.)	**KR**	1	Tre Tucker (Sr.)
P	31	Mason Fletcher (So.)	**PR**	22	Ryan Montgomery (Sr.)

MALIK VANN & DESHAWN PACE

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EAST CAROLINA PIRATES

National Forecast: 71 • AAC Prediction: 5 • Projected Record: 7-5, 5-3 AAC

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	NC State
Sept. 10	Old Dominion
Sept. 17	Campbell
Sept. 24	Navy
Oct. 1	at USF
Oct. 8	at Tulane
Oct. 15	Memphis
Oct. 22	UCF
Oct. 28	at BYU
Nov. 11	at Cincinnati
Nov. 19	Houston
Nov. 26	at Temple

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 7-5, 5-3 AAC

Sept. 2	vs. App. State #	L	19-33
Sept. 11	South Carolina	L	17-20
Sept. 18	at Marshall	W	42-38
Sept. 25	Charleston Southern	W	31-28
Oct. 2	Tulane	W	52-29
Oct. 9	at UCF	L	16-20
Oct. 23	at Houston (ot)	L	24-31
Oct. 28	USF	W	29-14
Nov. 6	Temple	W	45-3
Nov. 13	at Memphis (ot)	W	30-29
Nov. 20	at Navy	W	38-35
Nov. 26	Cincinnati	L	13-35

#Charlotte, N.C.

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	29.7 ppg	6	54
Rushing	162.6 ypg	6	63
Passing	270.8 ypg	4	24
Total	433.3 ypg	4	39

DEFENSE	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	25.8 ppg	4	58
Rushing	161.7 ypg	8	82
Passing	233.1 ypg	7	73
Total	394.8 ypg	6	80

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
-1	-0.08	5	74

STAT CORNER

25.2%

The East Carolina defense held opponents to a 44.3 percent quality possession rate, 33rd best in the country. The Pirates allowed 33 touchdowns on 131 drives (25.2%) and allowed no points on 88 of 131 drives (67.1%).

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Holton Ahlers, 414-256-3,126-10, 18 TDs
Rushing: Keaton Mitchell, 174 att., 1,132 yds., 9 TDs
Receiving: Ryan Jones, 37 rec., 442 yds., 5 TDs
Tackles: Myles Berry, 53
Sacks: Jeremy Lewis, 4.0
Interceptions: Malik Fleming, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Mike Houston
Record at School: 14-19 (3 years)
Career Record: 94-44 (11 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Donnie Kirkpatrick
Defensive Coordinator: Blake Harrell
Location: Greenville, NC
Stadium: Dowdy-Ficklen Stadium (50,000)

OFFENSE Pirates head coach Mike Houston returns all the rushing attack that amassed one of the program's highest totals since 2000. Not coincidentally, ECU posted a winning season for the first time since 2014. Houston reshaped the line, introduced two-tight-end sets and has Holton Ahlers, who is just 221 yards from ECU's career QB rushing mark, running the show.

Don't worry: The once-pass-happy Pirates won't permanently swear off the aerial game, but the perennial plethora of Pirate pass-catchers has questions. Talented C.J. Johnson averaged 14.9 yards per grab but was suspended this offseason. The smart money says he'll be back, but incoming Toledo grad transfer Isaiah Winstead could help if not. Slot receiver Maceo Donald must fill leading receiver Tyler Snead's shoes, and Georgia transfer Jaylen Johnson is new but has played on the game's biggest stage. Shane Calhoun and former Oklahoma TE Ryan Jones headline a group that will have a huge impact sooner rather than later.

Houston calls RBs Keaton Mitchell and Rahjai Harris both starters. They'll run behind a veteran line anchored by tackle Noah Henderson and built around versatile, experienced pieces like Nishad Strother, Avery Jones and emerging Isaiah Foote, who has stepped right in.

DEFENSE The Pirates disguise their defense, lining up in a polymorphous 3-4 or 4-3 with ends up or down and lots of fast edge guys making life miserable for offenses.

The big news out of spring was hard-hitting Xavier Smith moving back from hybrid rush end/OLB to inside 'backer, where he and fellow senior Myles Berry should form one of the AAC's top tandems. Smith's full-time return to the inside is a boon to the Pirates.

Reliable Rick D'Abreu, Immanuel Hickman and nose tackle Elijah Morris all return on the line. Hickman led the team with 7.5 tackles for a loss. Like on offense, Houston has made building depth and experience up front a priority. Rush end Jeremy Lewis notched four sacks and was fourth in total tackles.

All-AAC CB Ja'Quan McMillian and his five interceptions are gone, but skilled Malik Fleming and former safety Juan Powell are top shelf for a deep secondary that intercepted 15 passes. Tough-guy safety Jireh Wilson is an undersized run-stopper.

SPECIALISTS All-AAC kicker Owen Daffer returns after hitting 19-of-23 field-goal attempts, including a 54-yarder to beat Navy. Australian Luke Larsen has a leg up for punting chores. The return jobs are wide open with the graduation of the do-it-all Snead.

FINAL ANALYSIS Houston was on a mission to rebuild the Pirates' lines, toughen them in the trenches, build depth and put some oomph in the running game. They're there. With seven starters back on both sides and experience all over, the AAC has a problem with Houston and the Pirates. They're going to run it down people's throats and get after foes with an athletic, adaptable defense.

HOLTON AHLERS

East Carolina Athletics

> "This is a program quietly on the rise, and when the conference changes membership, they could end up on top of the new AAC. Mike Houston's legit."
>
> —An opposing AAC assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Marlon Gunn Jr., RB, Baton Rouge, LA	★★★
2	Jacob Sacra, OT, Baltimore, MD	★★★
3	Samuel Dankah, LB, Fork Union, VA	★★★
4	Isaiah Brown-Murray, CB, Cornelius, NC	★★★
5	J.D. Lampley, DL, Rockingham, NC	★★★
6	C.J. Mims, DL, Vanceboro, NC	★★★
7	Ja'Maurion Franklin, Edge, Lake City, SC	★★★
8	Jordan Huff, S, Madison, GA*	★★★
9	Nemo Squire, RB, Dillon, SC	★★★
10	Brock Spalding, WR, Lorton, VA	★★★

*junior college transfer

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

WR	**5**	**C.J. Johnson (Jr.)**		Isaiah Winstead (Sr.)
WR	28	Maceo Donald (Jr.)	11	Jhari Patterson (So.)
WR	1	Jaylen Johnson (Jr.)	9	Tyler Savage (So.)
LT	52	Parker Moorer (So.)	77	Walter Stribling (So.)
LG	**73**	**Nishad Strother (So.)**	78	Richard Pearce (Fr.)
C	**54**	**Avery Jones (Jr.)**	56	Ethan Lang (Fr.)
RG	66	Isaiah Foote (So.)	60	Robin Van Der Laan (Jr.)
RT	**69**	**Noah Henderson (Jr.)**	71	Bailey Malovic (Sr.)
TE	**80**	**Shane Calhoun (So.)**	4	Ryan Jones (Sr.)
QB	**12**	**Holton Ahlers (Sr.)**	10	Mason Garcia (So.)
RB	**25**	**Keaton Mitchell (So.)**	47	Rahjai Harris (So.)

DEFENSE (7)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	15	Rick D'Abreu (Jr.)	84	D'Angelo McKinnie (Jr.)
DT	**8**	**Immanuel Hickman (So.)**	93	Henry Garrison (Jr.)
NT	**90**	**Elijah Morris (So.)**	52	Xavier McIver (So.)
DE	53	Suirad Ware (So.)	56	D'Anta Johnson (So.)
OLB	**11**	**Jeremy Lewis (Jr.)**	44	Eric Doctor (So.)
ILB	**10**	**Xavier Smith (Sr.)**	19	Jacoby Simpson (Jr.)
ILB	**34**	**Myles Berry (Sr.)**	6	Teylor Jackson (So.)
CB	0	Juan Powell (So.)	23	Damel Hickman (Jr.)
CB	**1**	**Malik Fleming (Jr.)**	2	Sean Tucker (Fr.)
S	**5**	**Jireh Wilson (Jr.)**	7	Gerard Stringer (Jr.)
S	27	Shawn Dourseau (Jr.)	9	Teagan Wilk (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	41	Owen Daffer (So.)	KR	88	Jsi Hatfield (Jr.)
P	1	Luke Larsen (Fr.)	PR	1	Malik Fleming (Jr.)

HOUSTON COUGARS

National Forecast: 24 • AAC Prediction: 2 • Projected Record: 9-4, 6-2 AAC

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	at UTSA
Sept. 10	at Texas Tech
Sept. 17	Kansas
Sept. 24	Rice
Sept. 30	Tulane
Oct. 7	at Memphis
Oct. 22	at Navy
Oct. 29	USF
Nov. 5	at SMU
Nov. 12	Temple
Nov. 19	at East Carolina
Nov. 26	Tulsa

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 12-2, 8-0 AAC

Sept. 4	Texas Tech	L	21-38
Sept. 11	at Rice	W	44-7
Sept. 18	Grambling State	W	45-0
Sept. 25	Navy	W	28-20
Oct. 1	at Tulsa	W	45-10
Oct. 7	at Tulane	W	40-22
Oct. 23	East Carolina (ot)	W	31-24
Oct. 30	SMU	W	44-37
Nov. 6	at USF	W	54-42
Nov. 13	at Temple	W	37-8
Nov. 19	Memphis	W	31-13
Nov. 27	at UConn	W	45-17
Dec. 4	at Cincinnati #	L	20-35
Dec. 28	vs. Auburn %	W	17-13

#AAC Championship %Birmingham Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	35.9 ppg	3	15
Rushing	141.8 ypg	9	86
Passing	271.6 ypg	3	23
Total	413.4 ypg	6	60

DEFENSE	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	20.4 ppg	2	19
Rushing	107.2 ypg	1	10
Passing	194.0 ypg	3	18
Total	301.2 ypg	1	6

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
9	+0.64	2	17

STAT CORNER

23

Houston allowed only 23 successful passes on third downs, holding opponents to a nation's best 29.7 percent third-down conversion rate.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Clayton Tune, 421-287-3,546-10, 30 TDs
Rushing: Alton McCaskill IV, 189 att., 961 yds., 16 TDs
Receiving: Nathaniel Dell, 90 rec., 1,329 yds., 12 TDs
Tackles: Donavan Mutin, 77
Sacks: D'Anthony Jones, 7.0
Interceptions: Alex Hogan, Gervarrius Owens, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Dana Holgorsen
Record at School: 19-15 (3 years)
Career Record: 80-56 (11 years)
Offensive Coordinators: Shannon Dawson, Brandon Jones
Defensive Coordinator: Doug Belk
Location: Houston, TX
Stadium: TDECU Stadium (40,000)

OFFENSE The loss of running back Alton McCaskill IV to an ACL injury late in spring practice is a significant blow. Houston, however, returns arguably the league's top pass-catch combo in quarterback Clayton Tune and All-AAC wide receiver Nathaniel Dell.

Tune took a big step in Year 3 of head coach Dana Holgorsen's system, passing for 3,546 yards and 30 TDs. Dell produced one of the best receiving seasons in school history with 90 catches, 1,329 yards and 12 TDs. Dell is a speedy, big-play threat who had six 100-yard games, including 152 yards against Cincinnati in the AAC title game. Houston hit the transfer portal for reinforcements, picking up Samuel Brown (West Virginia), Joseph Manjack IV (USC) and Brice Johnson (Ole Miss). True freshman Matthew Golden turned heads in the spring.

Those additions will allow Houston to move Dell and KeSean Carter exclusively to the inside spots. Tight end Christian Trahan offers another reliable target.

Ta'Zhawn Henry, the team's second-leading rusher with 524 yards and seven touchdowns, takes over as the feature back until McCaskill's return and will be joined by USC transfer Brandon Campbell and Stacy Sneed.

Left tackle Patrick Paul and right guard Tank Jenkins are the only returners up front. Jack Freeman and true freshman Demetrius Hunter solidified the center spot in the spring, and Houston added transfer right tackle Tyler Johnson (Texas) just before Easter.

DEFENSE Houston has produced high NFL draft picks on the defensive line three of the last four years; the latest is Logan Hall, who follows in the steps of Ed Oliver (2019) and Payton Turner (2021). The defensive line is still an embarrassment of riches. "Sack Avenue," as Houston's D-line is called, posted 34.5 of the team's 45 total sacks in 2021. D'Anthony Jones and Derek Parish combined for 12 sacks and 20.5 tackles for a loss. Nelson Ceaser could be one of the top defensive ends in the AAC.

Middle linebacker Donavan Mutin is the heart and soul of the defense, while the back end of the secondary is experienced with Gervarrius Owens and Hasaan Hypolite making a combined 35 starts the last two seasons.

Replacing cornerbacks Marcus Jones and Damarion Williams is no easy task. Alex Hogan and Art Green came out of the spring as the starters. Moses Alexander, a top-rated juco signee, and Jayce Rogers will figure in the mix.

SPECIALISTS Laine Wilkins is back as punter, but Houston has to replace an All-America returner in Jones (nine career TDs) and kicker Dalton Witherspoon. Bubba Baxa and Kyle Ramsey are the candidates at kicker. Holgorsen says the return duties are wide open.

FINAL ANALYSIS Houston took a giant step in its 12-win season, and the Cougars aren't done. With no Cincinnati or UCF on the regular-season schedule and a manageable non-conference slate, they could challenge for the AAC title and New Year's Six bowl in their final season before moving to the Big 12.

NATHANIEL DELL

Jessica Hill/University of Houston Athletics

"The QB is probably the best in our league. They've got more guys coming in around him, too. They're a good pick to win the league and make some noise nationally."

—An opposing AAC assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Matthew Golden, WR, Houston, TX	★★★★
2	Demetrius Hunter, OL, Orange, TX	★★★
3	Moses Alexander, CB, Galveston, TX*	★★★
4	Trent McGaughey, TE, Conroe, TX	★★★
5	Quardale Patt, DL, Stafford, TX	★★★
6	CJ Nelson, WR, North Richland Hills, TX	★★★
7	Anthony Holmes Jr., DL, Houston, TX	★★★
8	Treylin Payne, LB, Converse, TX	★★★
9	Zykeius Strong, Edge, Birmingham, AL*	★★★
10	Tevin Shaw, OL, Manvel, TX	★★★

*junior college transfer

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	1	**Nathaniel Dell (Jr.)**	18	Joseph Manjack IV (So.)
WR	20	**KeSean Carter (Sr.)**	19	C.J. Guidry (Fr.)
WR	10	Matthew Golden (Fr.)	13	Samuel Brown (Fr.)
LT	76	**Patrick Paul (So.)**	60	Trevonte Sylvester (Fr.)
LG	73	Cam'Ron Johnson (So.)	79	Chayse Todd (So.)
C	75	Jack Freeman (Jr.)	55	Demetrius Hunter (Fr.)
RG	72	**Tank Jenkins (Jr.)**	53	Derek Bowman (Fr.)
RT		Tyler Johnson (So.)		Lance Robinson (So.)
TE	85	**Christian Trahan (Sr.)**		Logan Compton (Jr.)
QB	3	**Clayton Tune (Sr.)**		Lucas Coley (Fr.)
RB	4	Ta'Zhawn Henry (Sr.)		Brandon Campbell (Fr.)

DEFENSE (6)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	0	**Derek Parish (Sr.)**	44	D'Anthony Jones (Sr.)
NG	10	**Chidozie Nwankwo (So.)**	95	Jamykal Neal (Sr.)
DT	13	Sedrick Williams (Sr.)	93	Atlias Bell (Sr.)
DE	96	Nelson Ceaser (So.)	56	Latrell Bankston (Sr.)
MLB	3	**Donavan Mutin (Sr.)**	29	Jamal Morris (So.)
WLB	24	Malik Robinson (Sr.)	14	Mannie Nunnery (So.)
CB	19	Alex Hogan (Jr.)		Moses Alexander (Jr.)
CB	23	Art Green (Sr.)	16	Jayce Rogers (Sr.)
NB	16	**Jayce Rogers (Sr.)**	19	Alex Hogan (Jr.)
SS	5	**Hasaan Hypolite (Jr.)**	20	Antonio Brooks (Jr.)
FS	32	**Gervarrius Owens (Sr.)**	28	Thabo Mwaniki (Sr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	41	Bubba Baxa (Sr.)	**KR**	4	Ta'Zhawn Henry (Sr.)
P	22	Laine Wilkins (So.)	**PR**	1	Nathaniel Dell (Jr.)

MEMPHIS TIGERS

National Forecast: 74 • AAC Prediction: 6 • Projected Record: 7-5, 4-4 AAC

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	at Mississippi State
Sept. 10	at Navy
Sept. 17	Arkansas State
Sept. 24	North Texas
Oct. 1	Temple
Oct. 7	Houston
Oct. 15	at East Carolina
Oct. 22	at Tulane
Nov. 5	UCF
Nov. 10	Tulsa
Nov. 19	North Alabama
Nov. 26	at SMU

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 6-6, 3-5 AAC

Sept. 4	Nicholls	W	42-17
Sept. 11	at Arkansas State	W	55-50
Sept. 18	Mississippi State	W	31-29
Sept. 25	UTSA	L	28-31
Oct. 2	at Temple	L	31-34
Oct. 9	at Tulsa	L	29-35
Oct. 14	Navy	W	35-17
Oct. 22	at UCF	L	7-24
Nov. 6	SMU	W	28-25
Nov. 13	East Carolina (ot)	L	29-30
Nov. 19	at Houston	L	13-31
Nov. 27	Tulane	W	33-28

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	30.1 ppg	5	52
Rushing	136.2 ypg	10	92
Passing	298.8 ypg	2	16
Total	434.9 ypg	3	38

DEFENSE	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	29.2 ppg	8	91
Rushing	167.4 ypg	9	89
Passing	250.8 ypg	8	103
Total	418.2 ypg	9	95

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
-1	-0.08	5	74

STAT CORNER

36

The Tigers went for it on fourth down 36 times last season, the third-most attempts of any team in the nation. Memphis converted 61.1 percent of its attempts.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Seth Henigan, 393-235-3,322-8, 25 TDs
Rushing: Brandon Thomas, 116 att., 669 yds., 8 TDs
Receiving: Javon Ivory, 29 rec., 413 yds., 3 TDs
Tackles: Quindell Johnson, 105
Sacks: Jaylon Allen, 5.0
Interceptions: Rodney Owens, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Ryan Silverfield
Record at School: 14-10 (2+ years)
Career Record: 14-10 (2+ years)
Offensive Coordinator: Tim Cramsey
Defensive Coordinator: Matt Barnes
Location: Memphis, TN
Stadium: Liberty Bowl Memorial Stadium (58,325)

OFFENSE Quarterback Seth Henigan had an impressive freshman season after moving into the starting role following a preseason injury to Arizona transfer Grant Gunnell. Henigan became the first true freshman starter for the program and finished the season as the leader among the nation's freshmen QBs in completions, attempts, yards and touchdowns. In his 11 starts, he threw for 3,322 yards and 25 TDs and displayed poise beyond his age. He added 15 pounds in the offseason. Gunnell entered the transfer portal after the spring game.

The Tigers are relying on an experienced backfield — and the addition of Northern Illinois transfer Jevyon Ducker — to invigorate a once-productive run game. Leading rushers Brandon Thomas (669 yards, eight TDs) and Rodrigues Clark (387 yards, four TDs) return, but Ducker could be a key. He was the MAC Freshman of the Year in 2021 after rushing for 1,184 yards.

After several seasons featuring marquee No. 1 receivers Anthony Miller and Calvin Austin III, the Tigers will try a committee approach led by Javon Ivory, Gabriel Rogers and Eddie Lewis. Joseph Scates is a solid addition from the transfer portal after playing 33 games in three seasons at Iowa State.

DEFENSE All-AAC safety Quindell Johnson, whose interception and nine tackles in the regular-season finale against Tulane contributed to Memphis earning its bowl invitation, returns to bolster the group. The secondary also will benefit from Rodney Owens and Sylvonta Oliver taking advantage of their sixth seasons.

At linebacker, the additions of Syracuse transfer Geoffrey Cantin-Arku and Charlotte transfer Tyler Murray will help offset losses at the position. Cantin-Arku had 10 tackles for a loss, five sacks and three forced fumbles in his past two seasons. Murray led Charlotte in tackles in 2020 and 2021 and was a two-time honorable mention All-C-USA selection.

Wardalis Ducksworth and Cam'Ron Jackson bring experience up front. Ducksworth had two fumble recoveries last season, returning one of them for a touchdown.

SPECIALISTS Punter Joe Doyle (46-yard average) is back. Projected kicker David Kemp was hampered by injury for most of last season, but he returned and finished strong. Gabriel Rogers is back to return kicks after averaging a healthy 25.0 yards on 22 returns.

FINAL ANALYSIS Memphis earned an invitation to the Hawaii Bowl to extend its postseason streak to eight consecutive seasons, tops among non-Power 5 programs and 12th-best nationally. The bowl game was canceled due to a COVID-19 outbreak on Hawaii's team.

Head coach Ryan Silverfield starts his third season but will deal with staff changes after two new coordinators — Tim Cramsey (offense) and Matt Barnes (defense) — came aboard in the offseason. Most importantly, the Tigers must correct their turnover issues. They committed 14 in their six losses.

MEMPHIS
SMU
JAVON IVORY

AP Photo/Mark Humphrey

> "The QB is a gamer, but that system is boom or bust. They don't scare you like they used to. Maybe the OC change will help them."
>
> —An opposing AAC assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Joshua White, DL, Ellenwood, GA	★★★
2	Tevin Carter, QB, Memphis, TN	★★★
3	Jamari Hawkins, WR, Mobile, AL	★★★
4	Eric Gaston, DL, Antioch, TN	★★★
5	AJ Odom, LB, Oakman, AL	★★★
6	Trevor Hardy, S, Alabaster, AL	★★★
7	JC French, QB, Roswell, GA	★★★
8	Antwain Barham, LB, Milan, TN	★★★
9	Sutton Smith, RB, Marietta, GA	★★★
10	Joseph Norwood, S, Chattanooga, TN*	★★★

*junior college transfer

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	**4**	**Javon Ivory (Jr.)**	11	Joseph Scates (Jr.)
WR	9	Gabriel Rogers (Sr.)	6	Marcayll Jones (So.)
WR	**18**	**Eddie Lewis (Sr.)**	3	Roc Taylor (So.)
LT	55	Austin Myers (Sr.)	66	Makylan Pounders (Fr.)
LG	**65**	**Jonah Gambill (So.)**	57	Rodney Newsom (So.)
C	**70**	**Jacob Likes (Jr.)**	54	Brackston Alford (So.)
RG	**75**	**Matt Dale (Sr.)**	74	Ira Henry III (So.)
RT	52	Devontae Dobbs (Jr.)	51	Terrance McClain (So.)
TE	86	Caden Prieskorn (Jr.)	82	Anthony Landphere (So.)
QB	**5**	**Seth Henigan (So).**	12	Tevin Carter (Fr.)
RB	2	Rodrigues Clark (Jr.)	22	Brandon Thomas (So.)

DEFENSE (4)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	**97**	**Wardalis Ducksworth (Sr.)**	98	Cam'Ron Jackson (So.)
DT	98	Cam'Ron Jackson (So.)	96	Zy Brockington (So.)
DT	4	Maurice White (Sr.)	92	James Stewart (Fr.)
DE	22	Jaylon Allen (Sr.)	7	Warren Peeples (So.)
SLB	9	Geoffrey Cantin-Arku (Jr.)	56	Cincir Evans (Sr.)
MLB	8	Xavier Cullens (Sr.)	14	Davian Mayo (So.)
WLB	5	Tyler Murray (Sr.)	44	Bryce Edmondson (So.)
CB	2	Julian Barnett (Jr.)		Joseph Norwood (Jr.)
CB	**24**	**Greg Rubin (So.)**	11	Sylvonta Oliver (Sr.)
FS	**15**	**Quindell Johnson (Sr.)**	23	Ladarian Paulk (So.)
BS	**30**	**Rodney Owens (Sr.)**	29	Cameron Smith (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	37	David Kemp (So.)	**KR**	9	Gabriel Rogers (Sr.)
P	17	Joe Doyle (Sr.)	**PR**	18	Eddie Lewis (Sr.)

NAVY MIDSHIPMEN

National Forecast: 102 • AAC Prediction: 10 • Projected Record: 4-8, 2-6 AAC

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Delaware
Sept. 10	Memphis
Sept. 24	at East Carolina
Oct. 1	at Air Force
Oct. 8	Tulsa
Oct. 14	at SMU
Oct. 22	Houston
Oct. 29	Temple
Nov. 5	at Cincinnati
Nov. 12	vs. Notre Dame #
Nov. 19	at UCF
Dec. 10	vs. Army %

#Baltimore %Philadelphia

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 4-8, 3-5 AAC

Sept. 4	Marshall	L	7-49
Sept. 11	Air Force	L	3-23
Sept. 25	at Houston	L	20-28
Oct. 2	UCF	W	34-30
Oct. 9	SMU	L	24-31
Oct. 14	at Memphis	L	17-35
Oct. 23	Cincinnati	L	20-27
Oct. 29	at Tulsa	W	20-17
Nov. 6	at Notre Dame	L	6-34
Nov. 20	East Carolina	L	35-38
Nov. 27	at Temple	W	38-14
Dec. 11	vs. Army #	W	17-13

#East Rutherford, NJ

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	20.1 ppg	10	117
Rushing	225.5 ypg	1	9
Passing	56.8 ypg	11	130
Total	282.2 ypg	11	126

DEFENSE	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	28.2 ppg	6	82
Rushing	130.4 ypg	2	32
Passing	218.2 ypg	5	51
Total	348.6 ypg	3	34

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
+5	+0.42	4	36

STAT CORNER

33

Navy attempted to convert 33 fourth downs in 2021, seventh most in the nation, and was successful on 70 percent of those attempts.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Tai Lavatai, 61-34-449-2, 5 TDs
Rushing: Tai Lavatai, 170 att., 371 yds., 7 TDs
Receiving: Mark Walker, 7 rec., 63 yds., 0 TDs
Tackles: John Marshall, 54
Sacks: Clay Cromwell, 2.5
Interceptions: Three players tied with 1

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Ken Niumatalolo
Record at School: 105-75 (14+ years)
Career Record: 105-75 (14+ years)
Offensive Coordinator: TBD
Defensive Coordinator: Brian Newberry
Location: Annapolis, MD
Stadium: Navy-Marine Corps Memorial Stadium (34,000)

OFFENSE It was a second straight disappointing season in terms of production for the Midshipmen, who averaged 20.1 points and 282.2 yards per game in 2021. On a positive note, Navy's patented triple-option attack did improve its rushing game, ranking ninth nationally (225.5 yards per game) after finishing 52nd in 2020.

Quarterback Tai Lavatai seized the starting quarterback job and finished strong. Lavatai made plenty of big plays and few mistakes to help Navy upset Army.

Wide receivers Jayden Umbarger and Mark Walker are returning regulars. There is plenty of talent at slotback with Kai Puailoa-Rojas emerging as a playmaker in 2021. However, the fullback position is unproven; Anton Hall Jr. sits atop an inexperienced depth chart.

Lavatai showed a much greater grasp of the offense and ability to read defenses and make checks at the line of scrimmage during spring camp, and that provides hope the Mids will be able to put up the type of numbers necessary to succeed in the high-scoring AAC.

DEFENSE Navy was vastly improved on this side of the ball despite being remarkably young and inexperienced due to injuries and attrition.

Will Harbour, who missed half the season with injuries, has massive shoes to fill at inside linebacker after Diego Fagot, a three-time All-AAC selection, led the team in tackles for three straight seasons.

Free safety Rayuan Lane is a rising star in the secondary, but Navy is relying on a pair of sophomore cornerbacks in Elias Larry and Mbiti Williams — both of whom will be tested by the high-powered passing attacks in the American.

Nose guard Donald Berniard Jr., a third-year starter, anchors a defensive line that figures to be a strength. Jacob Busic showed tremendous promise in starting every game at end in 2021, while Clay Cromwell figures to make a major impact after moving from nose guard to tackle.

SPECIALISTS The Mids are blessed with an extremely reliable kicker in Bijan Nichols, a second-team All-AAC selection last season after converting 15-of-19 field goals and all 28 extra points. Riley Riethman was thrust into the role of starting punter as a plebe and was inconsistent until finding his footing in the second half of the season and finishing with a 42.7-yard average. Maquel Haywood emerged as a dangerous threat after taking over as primary kickoff returner five games into the 2021 season, averaging 31 yards per return.

FINAL ANALYSIS Navy was not as bad as the final record might indicate in 2021, losing four games by one score against easily the toughest schedule in program history.

The 2022 schedule is not quite as daunting, but Navy will nonetheless be predicted to finish in the bottom half of the AAC for the third straight season. Not being able to accept transfers or bring back fifth-year seniors and graduate students like all the other league schools has hurt the Midshipmen.

TAI LAVATAI

Rich Graessle/Icon Sportswire via Getty Images

> "They're always going to play you tough, but without that rare, once-a-decade athlete at QB, they're very manageable. They don't have a [Malcolm] Perry or [Keenan] Reynolds right now."
>
> —An opposing AAC assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Gracen Bell, TE, Lees Summit, MO	★★★
2	Christopher Calhoun II, QB, Jacksonville, FL	★★★
3	Karson Lopati, QB, Salt Lake City, UT	★★
4	Giuseppe Gottfried, OL, Saline, MI	★★
5	Riley Bergeson, ATH, Billings, MT	n/r
6	Lorenzo Vitti, CB, Dearborn, MI	n/r
7	Aaron Jones, ATH, Portland, OR	n/r
8	Tanner Call, DL, McKinney, TX	n/r
9	Ja'marcus Piper, LB, Lancaster, TX	n/r
10	Denim Edwards, RB, Miami, FL	n/r

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (4)

WR	87	Jayden Umbarger (Jr.)	0	Kroy Myers (So.)
WR	**80**	**Mark Walker (Sr.)**	89	Camari Williams (Jr.)
LT	61	Jamie Romo (Sr.)	72	Joseph Petti (Sr.)
LG	**71**	**Joshua Pena (Jr.)**	79	Ahmad Bradley (Jr.)
C	64	David Hixon (So.)	65	Brent Self (So.)
RG	73	Lirion Murtezi (Jr.)	76	Brandon Moore (Sr.)
RT	**68**	**Kip Frankland (Sr.)**	75	Sam Glover (Jr.)
QB	**1**	**Tai Lavatai (Jr.)**	7	Xavier Arline (Jr.)
SB	21	Kai Puailoa-Rojas (Jr.)	23	Vincent Terrell II (Jr.)
SB	24	Maquel Haywood (So.)	29	Daniel Jones (Jr.)
FB	34	Anton Hall Jr. (So.)	38	Logan Point (So.)

DEFENSE (6)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	**95**	**Jacob Busic (Jr.)**	94	Justin Reed (So.)
NG	**90**	**Donald Berniard Jr. (Jr.)**	99	Nolan Barber (So.)
DT	97	Clay Cromwell (Jr.)	93	Creedyn Foulger (So.)
OLB	**51**	**Nicholas Straw (Sr.)**	56	Max Sandlin (Sr.)
ILB	54	Will Harbour (Jr.)	52	Jianni Woodson-Brooks (So.)
ILB	44	Colin Ramos (So.)	47	Tyler Fletcher (So.)
OLB	**1**	**John Marshall (Sr.)**	31	Xavier McDonald (Jr.)
CB	8	Matthew Peters (Jr.)	3	Elias Larry (So.)
CB	7	Mbiti Williams Jr. (So.)	5	Willie Collins V (Jr.)
SS	**11**	**Eavan Gibbons (Jr.)**	14	Joshua Adams (Sr.)
FS	**18**	**Rayuan Lane III (So.)**	2	Marcus Moore (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	43	Bijan Nichols (Sr.)	**KR**	24	Maquel Haywood (So.)
P	90	Riley Riethman (So.)	**PR**	28	Amin Hassan (So.)

SMU MUSTANGS

National Forecast: 63 • AAC Prediction: 4 • Projected Record: 7-5, 5-3 AAC

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	at North Texas
Sept. 10	Lamar
Sept. 17	at Maryland
Sept. 24	TCU
Oct. 1	at UCF
Oct. 14	Navy
Oct. 22	Cincinnati
Oct. 29	at Tulsa
Nov. 5	Houston
Nov. 12	at USF
Nov. 17	at Tulane
Nov. 26	Memphis

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 8-4, 4-4 AAC

Sept. 4	Abilene Christian	W	56-9
Sept. 11	North Texas	W	35-12
Sept. 18	at Louisiana Tech	W	39-37
Sept. 25	at TCU	W	42-34
Oct. 2	USF	W	41-17
Oct. 9	at Navy	W	31-24
Oct. 21	Tulane	W	55-26
Oct. 30	at Houston	L	37-44
Nov. 6	at Memphis	L	25-28
Nov. 13	UCF	W	55-28
Nov. 20	at Cincinnati	L	14-48
Nov. 27	Tulsa	L	31-34

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	38.4 ppg	1	9
Rushing	161.4 ypg	7	67
Passing	304.5 ypg	1	14
Total	465.9 ypg	1	13

DEFENSE	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	28.4 ppg	7	86
Rushing	136.8 ypg	3	39
Passing	278.1 ypg	11	124
Total	414.8 ypg	8	92

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
-3	-0.25	8	87

STAT CORNER

51.9%

SMU avoided 3rd downs on 51.9% of each fresh set of downs, ranking 18th in the nation. The Mustangs averaged 0.0835 EPA/play on early downs, 34th best in the country.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Tanner Mordecai, 454-308-3,628-12, 39 TDs
Rushing: Tre Siggers, 147 att., 727 yds., 9 TDs
Receiving: Rashee Rice, 64 rec., 670 yds., 9 TDs
Tackles: Jimmy Phillips Jr., 60
Sacks: DeVere Levelston, 6.5
Interceptions: Isaiah Nwokobia, Isaac Slade-Matautia, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Rhett Lashlee
Record at School: First Season
Career Record: First Season
Offensive Coordinator: Casey Woods
Defensive Coordinator: Scott Symons
Location: Dallas, TX
Stadium: Gerald J. Ford Stadium (32,000)

OFFENSE In his first season at SMU, Tanner Mordecai led the AAC with 3,628 yards passing, and his 39 touchdowns ranked fifth nationally. But those numbers did not guarantee him the starting job over redshirt freshman Preston Stone. New head coach Rhett Lashlee is banking on both quarterbacks improving through competition, although Mordecai will be hard to unseat.

The receiver corps lost breakaway threats Danny Gray and Reggie Roberson Jr., who declared for the NFL Draft. Rashee Rice, the team leader in receptions with 64, figures to be the main target. Transfers Beau Corrales from North Carolina and Joshua Moore from Texas will provide depth and experience.

The offensive line, which showed improvement last season, will get major help from transfers Joe Bissinger from Virginia and Owen Condon from Georgia. The Mustangs allowed only 16 sacks, a remarkable number considering their 468 passes. Tre Siggers, who rushed for 727 yards and nine TDs, returns along with strong short-yardage back Tyler Lavine.

The offense will not be dramatically different under Lashlee. The most noticeable changes will be a faster pace and more intermediate and long throws.

DEFENSE SMU was strong up front, allowing only 3.8 yards per rush and posting 27 sacks. Many of the main contributors return, including DeVere Levelston and Turner Coxe, who combined for 12.5 sacks.

Improving the secondary is the team's biggest challenge. The unit placed pressure on the offense by surrendering big plays and failing to create momentum with turnovers. Opponents averaged 278.1 yards passing per game and 8.3 yards per attempt.

New defensive coordinator Scott Symons has employed a 4-2-5 scheme. Symons hopes to take advantage of SMU's speed to create a more aggressive attack.

One wrinkle in the 4-2-5 is the nickel back, which in theory should help SMU's coverage and turnover production. Freshman Pierre Goree (6'1", 220) from nearby Duncanville seems the perfect fit for this hybrid position.

SPECIALISTS Collin Rogers, one of the nation's best high school kickers, will be a welcome addition. He chose SMU over offers from Georgia, Florida State and Ole Miss. Brendan Hall, 6'8", 230, averaged 41.7 yards per punt with a long of 67 yards and nine inside the 20.

FINAL ANALYSIS Transition years can be tough. But having served as offensive coordinator under Sonny Dykes in 2018 and 2019, Lashlee has firsthand knowledge of what it takes to succeed on the Hilltop. He recruited about half of SMU's current roster. His familiarity with the program should make the first-year transition smoother than most.

The schedule is favorable with TCU and AAC opponents Houston and Cincinnati at home. If the Mustangs can avoid the late-season swoons of the previous regime, they could notch eight or nine wins and a bowl berth.

RASHEE RICE

SMU Athletics

> "The rep under Sonny Dykes was that they were a great front-runner who would fall apart down the stretch. They have to change that. The QB is decent but doesn't have much help."
>
> —An opposing AAC assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	RJ Maryland, TE, Southlake, TX	★★★★
2	Pierre Goree, S, Duncanville, TX	★★★
3	Dylan Frazier, DL, McKinney, TX	★★★
4	Isaiah Smith, Edge, Washington, DC	★★★
5	AJ Davis, CB, Dallas TX	★★★
6	Trey Fite, Edge, Tatum, TX	★★★
7	Ahmaad Moses, S, Arlington, TX	★★★
8	Jayden Lawton, CB, Lucas, TX	★★★
9	Jacob Waller, OT, Arlington, TX	★★★
10	Rhett Larson, OL, College Station, TX	★★★

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

WR	**11**	**Rashee Rice (Sr.)**	10	Dylan Goffney (So.)
WR	3	Beau Corrales (Sr.)	6	Austin Upshaw (Sr.)
WR	1	Jordan Kerley (Jr.)	13	Roderick Daniels Jr. (So.)
LT		Owen Condon (Sr.)	70	Thalen Robinson (Jr.)
LG		Joe Bissinger (Sr.)	64	Cameron Ervin (Jr.)
C	**71**	**Jaylon Thomas (Sr.)**	**56**	**Branson Hickman (So.)**
RG	**51**	**Justin Osborne (Jr.)**	79	Danielson Ike (Jr.)
RT	52	Marcus Bryant (Jr.)	78	Dalton Perdue (So.)
TE	14	Nolan Matthews-Harris (Jr.)	83	Kam Allen (Fr.)
QB	**8**	**Tanner Mordecai (Sr.)**	2	Preston Stone (Fr.)
RB	4	Tre Siggers (Sr.)		Camar Wheaton (Fr.)

DEFENSE (7)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	**96**	**DeVere Levelston (Sr.)**	9	Nelson Paul (Sr.)
NT	91	Terrance Newman (Sr.)	39	Darren Brown (Sr.)
DT	**40**	**Elijah Chatman (Sr.)**	47	Stone Eby (Fr.)
DE	86	Je'lin Samuels (Fr.)	33	Junior Aho (Sr.)
OLB	**6**	**Jimmy Phillips Jr. (Sr.)**	12	Shanon Reid (Sr.)
OLB	**97**	**Turner Coxe (Sr.)**	3	Gary Wiley (Sr.)
CB	**4**	**Jahari Rogers (So.)**	5	Ar'mani Johnson (Sr.)
CB	**7**	**Bryce McMorris (So.)**	1	Brandon Crossley (Sr.)
NB	0	Bryan Massey (Jr.)	22	Pierre Goree (Fr.)
S	2	Isaiah Nwokobia (So.)	13	Roderick Roberson Jr. (Jr.)
S	**18**	**Chace Cromartie (Sr.)**	11	Chevin Calloway (Sr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	41	Collin Rogers (Fr.)	**KR**	0	Bryan Massey (Jr.)
P	93	Brendan Hall (So.)	**PR**	1	Jordan Kerley (Jr.)

TEMPLE OWLS

National Forecast: 122 • AAC Prediction: 11 • Projected Record: 3-9, 1-7 AAC

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	at Duke
Sept. 10	Lafayette
Sept. 17	Rutgers
Sept. 24	UMass
Oct. 1	at Memphis
Oct. 13	at UCF
Oct. 21	Tulsa
Oct. 29	at Navy
Nov. 5	USF
Nov. 12	at Houston
Nov. 19	Cincinnati
Nov. 26	East Carolina

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 3-9, 1-7 AAC

Sept. 4	at Rutgers	L	14-61
Sept. 11	at Akron	W	45-24
Sept. 18	Boston College	L	3-28
Sept. 25	Wagner	W	41-7
Oct. 2	Memphis	W	34-31
Oct. 8	at Cincinnati	L	3-52
Oct. 23	at USF	L	14-34
Oct. 30	UCF	L	7-49
Nov. 6	at East Carolina	L	3-45
Nov. 13	Houston	L	8-37
Nov. 20	at Tulsa	L	10-44
Nov. 27	Navy	L	14-38

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	16.3 ppg	11	126
Rushing	109.3 ypg	11	117
Passing	178.1 ypg	10	110
Total	287.4 ypg	10	125

DEFENSE	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	37.5 ppg	11	122
Rushing	220.4 ypg	11	121
Passing	177.9 ypg	2	5
Total	398.3 ypg	7	82

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
-2	-0.17	7	81

STAT CORNER

30.9%

The Owls were successful (EPA>0) on just 30.9 percent of their passes in 2021. They were one of only eight teams to average fewer than six yards per attempt.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: D'Wan Mathis, 195-116-1,225-4, 6 TDs
Rushing: Edward Saydee, 87 att., 321 yds., 3 TDs
Receiving: Jose Barbon, 40 rec., 440 yds., 2 TDs
Tackles: Alex Odom, 57
Sacks: Darian Varner, 3.0
Interceptions: Jalen Ware, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Stan Drayton
Record at School: First Season
Career Record: First Season
Offensive Coordinator: Danny Langsdorf
Defensive Coordinator: D.J. Eliot
Location: Philadelphia, PA
Stadium: Lincoln Financial Field (69,796)

OFFENSE In 2020, current Temple quarterback D'Wan Mathis was the opening-game starter for Georgia. Think about that. Last season he was never 100 percent physically. Yet he still had some moments, especially in an early win over Memphis. He had entered the transfer portal before head coach Rod Carey was let go and replaced by longtime FBS assistant Stan Drayton. A dual-threat talent, Mathis has potential.

The running back position is Drayton's specialty. The Owls were young at that spot and still are. Edward Saydee led the way last season with just over 300 yards. Darvon Hubbard, who originally went to Texas A&M, and South Jersey product and Florida transfer Iverson Clement could turn out to be the best of the bunch.

The line returns two four-year starters: Adam Klein, who's played every position and will now be the center, and Isaac Moore at left tackle. Offensive coordinator Danny Langsdorf might end up employing two tight ends as often as three wide receivers.

DEFENSE The Owls are switching to a 3-4 alignment after giving up at least 34 points in eight games, including each of the last seven. Like many other teams, they have looked to the transfer portal to shore up weaknesses.

One end, Jerquavion Mahone, is a transfer from Kentucky. Nose tackle Xach Gill, a transfer from North Carolina, missed last season with an injury. Jordan Magee and Kobe Wilson, both sophomores, could emerge as leaders at linebacker.

The secondary might be the strength of this unit. Cameron Ruiz and Keyshawn Paul, two seniors, are returning starters at cornerback. DaeSean Winston and Jalen Ware head a deep contingent at safety.

SPECIALISTS This is an area that has really hurt the Owls the last few years. The hope is that new special teams coordinator Adam Scheier, who came from Rutgers, can change that. Rory Bell made 9-of-16 field goals. Redshirt freshman Noah Botsford, a former walk-on who was an all-stater in Florida for a team that won two 7A titles, should get the first shot to be the punter. Amad Anderson Jr. should once again be the kickoff and punt returner.

FINAL ANALYSIS Drayton has waited for his opportunity for nearly three decades. He coached Ezekiel Elliott when Ohio State won it all in 2014. He will be starting mostly from scratch, although if Mathis can perform like many once projected him to, it would certainly make things that much easier on everyone.

The schedule has the Owls playing each of the AAC's traditional heavyweights: Cincinnati, Houston and UCF. They don't get SMU, the other American school with a new head coach. Out of conference, the Owls have winnable games with Duke (also with a first-year coach), Lafayette and UMass, but anything remotely approaching a run at .500 might be asking too much. Drayton will be learning on the job, too. His first and biggest challenge is to build a foundation.

D'WAN MATHIS

Temple Athletics

"They just weren't competitive last year. You could see the spirit was gone. No one really knows what to make of Stan Drayton going to this job."

—An opposing AAC assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Jackson Pruitt, OL, Detroit, MI	★★★
2	Corey Yeoman, LB, Clearwater, FL	★★★
3	London Hall, CB, Clearwater, FL	★★★
4	Zamar Grove, Edge, Irvington, NJ	★★★
5	Sam Martin Jr., RB, Staten Island, NY	★★★
6	Khalif Kemp, LB, Philadelphia, PA	★★★
7	E.J. Warner, QB, Phoenix, AZ	★★★
8	Jacob Hollins, LB, Fresno, CA*	★★★
9	Reese Clark, ATH, Philadelphia, PA	★★★
10	Aaron Jones, DL, Springfield, MA	★★★

*junior college transfer

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	**85**	**Amad Anderson Jr. (Jr.)**	83	Kwesi Evans (So.)
WR	**10**	**Jose Barbon (Jr.)**	80	Zae Baines (Fr.)
WR	12	Kadas Reams (Jr.)	88	De'Von Fox (So.)
LT	**63**	**Isaac Moore (Sr.)**	56	Jimto Obidegwu (So.)
LG	79	Wisdom Quarshie (So.)	55	Chevez Trask (Fr.)
C	**74**	**Adam Klein (Sr.)**	61	Luke Foster (Sr.)
RG	76	Richard Rodriguez (Jr.)	72	Bryce Thoman (So.)
RT	78	Victor Stoffel (So.)	71	Jermaine Donaldson (So.)
TE	82	David Martin-Robinson (Jr.)	84	Jordan Smith (Jr.)
QB	**18**	**D'Wan Mathis (So.)**	17	Mariano Valenti (So.)
RB	**23**	**Edward Saydee (So.)**	24	Iverson Clement (Jr.)

DEFENSE (5)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	50	Darian Varner (So.)	93	Dyshier Clary (So.)
NT	91	Xach Gill (Sr.)	90	Jalen Satchell (Fr.)
DE	**17**	**Jerquavion Mahone (Jr.)**	54	Jacoby Sharpe (So.)
OLB	13	Layton Jordan (Jr.)	44	Travon King (Jr.)
ILB	11	Kobe Wilson (So.)	31	Yvandy Rigby (So.)
ILB	**23**	**Jordan Magee (So.)**	15	Jacob Hollins (Jr.)
OLB	42	Muheem McCargo (So.)	40	D.J. Woodbury (So.)
CB	**19**	**Cameron Ruiz (Sr.)**	27	Nate Wyatt (So.)
CB	**24**	**Keyshawn Paul (Sr.)**	20	Elijah Clark (Jr.)
S	16	DaeSean Winston (Jr.)	18	Kwantel Raines (Jr.)
S	38	Jalen Ware (Sr.)	**25**	**Alex Odom (So.)**

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	47	Rory Bell (So.)	**KR**	85	Amad Anderson Jr. (Jr.)
P	92	Noah Botsford (Fr.)	**PR**	85	Amad Anderson Jr. (Jr.)

TULANE GREEN WAVE

National Forecast: 84 • AAC Prediction: 7 • Projected Record: 6-6, 3-5 AAC

OFFENSE Every offensive assistant but tight ends coach Slade Nagel is gone after Tulane's surprising freefall to 2–10 in 2021, so the offense should look quite different. Whether or not it improves hinges on how well the players adapt to new offensive coordinator Jim Svoboda, a Division II success story who marries the West Coast offense with modern spread and run-pass option concepts.

Quarterback Michael Pratt is due for a breakthrough season if his head stops spinning from working with his third coordinator in three years. He took several hellacious hits and played through a shoulder injury he sustained in the opener against Oklahoma, missing some throws he had made as a freshman. He still tossed 21 touchdown passes with only eight interceptions.

The healthy presence of running back Tyjae Spears will make Pratt's life easier. Returning from a torn ACL, Spears had four 100-yard games in his last five, including a 264-yard outburst at Memphis. Colorado transfer Ashaad Clayton, a former four-star recruit, adds depth.

Wideout Shae Wyatt (33 catches, 376 yards) and tight end Tyrick James (31 catches, 429 yards) are the leading returning receivers. The offensive line has All-AAC candidate Sincere Haynesworth at center but question marks at almost every other spot.

DEFENSE Second-year coordinator Chris Hampton is counting on the improvement his group showed in November — when Tulane was among the AAC's leaders in yards and points allowed — to be the norm in 2022.

Linebackers Dorian Williams and Nick Anderson are one of the better duos in the league. Williams led the AAC in tackles in 2020. Anderson arguably was Tulane's best defender last season, but a high ankle sprain affected him for several weeks.

Edge rusher Darius Hodges led the AAC with 15.5 tackles for a loss despite not starting at the beginning of the year; he gets after quarterbacks and plays the run equally well. The Green Wave lost graduate transfer defensive tackle Jeffery Johnson to Oklahoma but used the portal to get TCU's Patrick Jenkins, a local product who had an outstanding spring.

The secondary allowed opponents to complete 66.3 percent of their passes. Jadon Canady, a standout nickel back as a freshman, could move to cornerback. Leading tackler Macon Clark returns at safety but could play nickel.

SPECIALISTS Placekicking shapes up as a massive problem. Sophomores Graham Dable and Kriston Esnard will try to earn the job. Punter Casey Glover was solid in the spring but will be hard-pressed to match All-AAC punter Ryan Wright's 47.5-yard average. Junior Jha'Quan Jackson will handle returns.

FINAL ANALYSIS Tulane expected to have its best season under head coach Willie Fritz and had by far its worst. With the schedule lightening up considerably (no Oklahoma, no Ole Miss), the Green Wave could triple their win total and get back to the six-victory plateau they occupied from 2018-20.

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	UMass
Sept. 10	Alcorn State
Sept. 17	at Kansas State
Sept. 24	Southern Miss
Sept. 30	at Houston
Oct. 8	East Carolina
Oct. 15	at USF
Oct. 22	Memphis
Nov. 5	at Tulsa
Nov. 12	UCF
Nov. 17	SMU
Nov. 26	at Cincinnati

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 2-10, 1-7 AAC

Sept. 4	at Oklahoma	L	35-40
Sept. 11	Morgan State	W	69-20
Sept. 18	at Ole Miss	L	21-61
Sept. 25	UAB	L	21-28
Oct. 2	at East Carolina	L	29-52
Oct. 7	Houston	L	22-40
Oct. 21	at SMU	L	26-55
Oct. 30	Cincinnati	L	12-31
Nov. 6	at UCF	L	10-14
Nov. 13	Tulsa (ot)	L	13-20
Nov. 20	USF	W	45-14
Nov. 27	at Memphis	L	28-33

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	27.6 ppg	7	74
Rushing	164.8 ypg	5	60
Passing	221.8 ypg	7	74
Total	386.5 ypg	8	73

DEFENSE	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	34.0 ppg	9	114
Rushing	158.4 ypg	6	78
Passing	271.2 ypg	10	120
Total	429.7 ypg	10	102

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
-9	-0.75	11	122

STAT CORNER

0.255

Tulane's pass defense ranked 124th in explosiveness, allowing 0.255 EPA/pass and a 45.4 percent success rate. The Green Wave gave up 57 plays of 20-plus yards, 104th in the FBS.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Michael Pratt, 328-189-2,381-8, 21 TDs
Rushing: Tyjae Spears, 129 att., 863 yds., 9 TDs
Receiving: Shae Wyatt, 33 rec., 376 yds., 3 TDs
Tackles: Macon Clark, 73
Sacks: Darius Hodges, 5.0
Interceptions: Macon Clark, 4

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Willie Fritz
Record at School: 31-43 (6 years)
Career Record: 185-112 (25 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Jim Svoboda
Defensive Coordinator: Chris Hampton
Location: New Orleans, LA
Stadium: Yulman Stadium (30,000)

MICHAEL PRATT

Brian Bahr/Getty Images

> "They haven't recruited well enough to fix what you saw last year, but Willie [Fritz] is a great coach. They're part spread, part triple, part trickery. They're going to get creative."
>
> —An opposing AAC assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Blake Gunter, TE, Madison, MS	★★★
2	Maxie Baudoin IV, DL, Lafayette, LA	★★★
3	Taylor Love, LB, Opelika, AL	★★★
4	Makhi Hughes, RB, Birmingham, AL	★★★
5	Chris Brazzell II, WR, Midland, TX	★★★
6	Kentrell Webb, S, Katy, TX	★★★
7	Rayshawn Pleasant, ATH, West Monroe, LA	★★★
8	Kameron Hamilton, DL, Zachary, LA	★★★
9	Jalen Rogers, WR, Fort Lauderdale, FL	★★★
10	Carson Haggard, QB, Miami, FL	★★★

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)

WR	**10**	**Shae Wyatt (Sr.)**	4	Jha'Quan Jackson (Jr.)
WR	2	Duece Watts (Sr.)	14	Dea Dea McDougle (So.)
WR	3	Phat Watts (Sr.)	83	Bryce Bohanon (So.)
LT	**79**	**Joey Claybrook (Sr.)**	65	Sully Burns (Fr.)
LG	68	Josh Remetich (So.)	74	Jackson Fort (So.)
C	**52**	**Sincere Haynesworth (Jr.)**	75	Joseph Solomon (Fr.)
RG	**58**	**Caleb Thomas (So.)**	**72**	**Trey Tuggle (Fr.)**
RT	**69**	**Rashad Green (So.)**	71	Matt Lombardi (Fr.)
TE	**80**	**Tyrick James (Sr.)**	84	Will Wallace (Sr.)
QB	**7**	**Michael Pratt (So.)**	13	Justin Ibieta (Fr.)
RB	22	Tyjae Spears (So.)	0	Ashaad Clayton (Fr.)

DEFENSE (7)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	54	Carlos Hatcher (So.)	3	Angelo Anderson (So.)
NT	95	Adonis Friloux (So.)	**94**	**Eric Hicks Jr. (So.)**
DT	0	Patrick Jenkins (So.)	55	Noah Taliancich (So.)
JOKER	**41**	**Darius Hodges (So.)**	49	Armoni Dixon (So.)
ILB	**1**	**Nick Anderson (Sr.)**	35	Jesus Machado (So.)
ILB	**2**	**Dorian Williams (Jr.)**	45	Corey Platt Jr. (Fr.)
CB	**28**	**Jadon Canady (So.)**	7	Lance Robinson (Jr.)
CB	11	Jarius Monroe (Jr.)	19	Kiland Harrison (So.)
NB	**37**	**Macon Clark (Sr.)**	25	Kevaris Hall (Fr.)
SS	**31**	**Larry Brooks (Sr.)**	12	DJ Douglas (So.)
FS	23	Lummie Young IV (Sr.)	32	Bailey Despanie (Fr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	67	Graham Dable (So.)	**KR**	4	Jha'Quan Jackson (Jr.)
P	96	Casey Glover (Jr.)	**PR**	4	Jha'Quan Jackson (Jr.)

TULSA GOLDEN HURRICANE

National Forecast: 90 • AAC Prediction: 8 • Projected Record: 6-6, 3-5 AAC

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	at Wyoming
Sept. 10	Northern Illinois
Sept. 17	Jacksonville State
Sept. 24	at Ole Miss
Oct. 1	Cincinnati
Oct. 8	at Navy
Oct. 21	at Temple
Oct. 29	SMU
Nov. 5	Tulane
Nov. 10	at Memphis
Nov. 18	USF
Nov. 26	at Houston

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 7-6, 5-3 AAC

Sept. 2	UC Davis	L	17-19
Sept. 11	at Oklahoma St.	L	23-28
Sept. 18	at Ohio State	L	20-41
Sept. 25	Arkansas State	W	41-34
Oct. 1	Houston	L	10-45
Oct. 9	Memphis	W	35-29
Oct. 16	at USF	W	32-31
Oct. 29	Navy	L	17-20
Nov. 6	at Cincinnati	L	20-28
Nov. 13	at Tulane (ot)	W	20-13
Nov. 20	Temple	W	44-10
Nov. 27	at SMU	W	34-31
Dec. 20	vs. Old Dominion #	W	30-17

#Myrtle Beach Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	26.4 ppg	8	81
Rushing	192.0 ypg	3	34
Passing	249.5 ypg	5	53
Total	441.5 ypg	2	28

DEFENSE	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	26.6 ppg	5	71
Rushing	142.7 ypg	4	48
Passing	228.2 ypg	6	66
Total	370.8 ypg	5	56

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
-6	-0.46	10	104

STAT CORNER

44%

Tulsa was successful (EPA>0) on 44.0 percent of passes in 2021, 26th best in the nation, but averaged 0.061 EPA/pass, just the 60th-best explosiveness figure.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Davis Brin, 411-244-3,244-16, 18 TDs
Rushing: Anthony Watkins, 86 att., 634 yds., 4 TDs
Receiving: JuanCarlos Santana, 51 rec., 689 yds., 3 TDs
Tackles: Justin Wright, 82
Sacks: Anthony Goodlow, 6.0
Interceptions: Four players tied with 1

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Philip Montgomery
Record at School: 38-46 (7 years)
Career Record: 38-46 (7 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Philip Montgomery
Defensive Coordinator: Luke Olson
Location: Tulsa, OK
Stadium: H.A. Chapman Stadium (30,000)

OFFENSE Fifth-year senior Davis Brin is back at quarterback after an up-and-down first season as starter in which he threw for 3,244 yards and led the nation with 16 interceptions. His primary targets are expected to be JuanCarlos Santana, who caught 51 passes for 689 yards in 2021; Keylon Stokes, a top-10 receiver in program history; spring standout Malachai Jones; and Isaiah Epps, a Kentucky transfer from the Tulsa area. Tight end Ethan Hall remains a key piece of the offensive puzzle, both as a blocker and a pass-catcher.

Running back continues to be a deep and talent-filled position for the Golden Hurricane, with Deneric Prince, Anthony Watkins and Steven Anderson combining for 1,377 yards and 11 touchdowns last year. Jordan Ford, who led the junior college ranks with 1,039 rushing yards in 2020, also will be in the rotation.

The biggest concern is an offensive line that lost four starters to transfer, the NFL Draft and graduation. Super senior Gerard Wheeler, who has started 33 games at center, is the anchor. Bryce Bray and Will Farniok, whose careers began at Power 5 schools, are likely starters.

DEFENSE Following three solid seasons as defensive coordinator, Joseph Gillespie left for the same position at TCU — a significant loss for Tulsa. Top playmaker Jaxon Player transferred to Baylor, leaving a huge void up front.

Defensive end Anthony Goodlow, who led the team with six sacks in 2021, will be among the most experienced defenders. Joseph Anderson, a former walk-on, and Jayden Simon, a Colorado transfer, are candidates to start at the other spots on the line.

After matching the team high with 82 tackles last year, Justin Wright will again bring physicality to middle linebacker alongside Grant Sawyer, a veteran who has appeared in 46 career games, and Jon-Michael Terry, a former Oklahoma player who missed most of 2021 with an injury.

In his comeback from a foot injury, Kendarin Ray headlines a secondary that also features Bryson Powers, who has forced six fumbles in his career, and Tyon Davis, who has started 14 games at cornerback. Safeties LJ Wallace and Jaise Oliver also have starting experience.

SPECIALISTS Zack Long emerged last year as a reliable placekicker, connecting on 22-of-23 field-goal attempts with the lone miss coming from 50 yards. He is back for an additional season along with Tyler Tipton, who shared kickoff duties in 2021. Punter Lachlan Wilson, another valuable weapon, also returns. He delivered 23 punts of at least 50 yards last season.

FINAL ANALYSIS The Hurricane finished 2021 with four consecutive victories and will look to carry that over into Philip Montgomery's eighth season at the helm. Of the six losses, four were to teams that finished in the top 20 of the AP poll. This year's schedule is much more manageable, particularly in nonconference play. Although contending in the AAC seems unlikely, anything less than bowl eligibility would be a disappointment.

JUSTIN WRIGHT

Tulsa Athletics

> "I think that they're going to fall to that 4–8 realm with a win against someone they shouldn't beat. They're back into that world."
>
> —An opposing AAC assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Keith Wheeler II, WR, Humble, TX	★★★
2	Cardell Williams, QB, Houston, TX	★★★
3	NuNu Campbell, CB, Tulsa, OK	★★★
4	Charles Hodge IV, WR, Smithville, TX	★★★
5	Eli McWilliams, LB, Tahlequah, OK	★★★
6	Nick Rempert, WR, Batavia, IL*	★★★
7	Connor Vaughn, TE, Flower Mound, TX	★★★
8	Devan Williams, WR, Temple, TX	★★★
9	Daniel Ademisoye, OT, Chatsworth, CA	★★
10	Tanyon Zachary, OL, Lubbock, TX	★★

*junior college transfer

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	13	Malachai Jones (So.)	3	Isaiah Epps (Sr.)
WR	**2**	**Keylon Stokes (Sr.)**	26	Marquis Shoulders (Fr.)
WR	**5**	**JuanCarlos Santana (Sr.)**	9	Nick Rempert (Jr.)
LT	72	Dillon Wade (So.)	79	Jaden Muskrat (So.)
LG	74	Jeremy Jones (Jr.)	76	Chester Baah (Jr.)
C	**66**	**Gerard Wheeler (Sr.)**	60	Trent Robinson (Fr.)
RG	56	Will Farniok (Jr.)	50	Gabe Cantu (So.)
RT	**77**	**Bryce Bray (Jr.)**	54	Walter Young Bear (Fr.)
TE	**47**	**Ethan Hall (Jr.)**	88	Bayne Tryon (So.)
QB	**7**	**Davis Brin (Sr.)**	1	Braylon Braxton (Fr.)
RB	8	Deneric Prince (Sr.)	23	Anthony Watkins (Jr.)

DEFENSE (3)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DT	44	Joseph Anderson (Sr.)	48	Owen Ostroski (Fr.)
NG	90	Jayden Simon (So.)	11	Everitt Rogers (Jr.)
DE	94	Anthony Goodlow (Sr.)	96	Vincent Ume-Ezeoke (Jr.)
STAR	19	Grant Sawyer (Sr.)	8	Brian Johnson (Sr.)
MLB	**30**	**Justin Wright (Sr.)**	41	Dorian Hopkins (Jr.)
WLB	6	Jon-Michael Terry (Sr.)	40	Mitchell Kulkin (Sr.)
CB	**0**	**Tyon Davis (Sr.)**	5	Kenney Solomon (Jr.)
CB	12	Tyree Carlisle (Jr.)	15	Reggie Ellis (Jr.)
NB	21	Bryson Powers (Sr.)	9	Daiquain Jackson (Sr.)
SS	**1**	**Kendarin Ray (Sr.)**	25	Jaise Oliver (Jr.)
FS	22	LJ Wallace (Sr.)	10	Sean O'Keefe (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	90	Zack Long (Sr.)	KR	5	Kenney Solomon (Jr.)
P	37	Lachlan Wilson (Jr.)	PR	18	Kamdyn Benjamin (Jr.)

UCF KNIGHTS

National Forecast: 45 • AAC Prediction: 3 • Projected Record: 8-4, 5-3 AAC

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	South Carolina State
Sept. 9	Louisville
Sept. 17	at Florida Atlantic
Sept. 24	Georgia Tech
Oct. 1	SMU
Oct. 13	Temple
Oct. 22	at East Carolina
Oct. 29	Cincinnati
Nov. 5	at Memphis
Nov. 12	at Tulane
Nov. 19	Navy
Nov. 26	at USF

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 9-4, 5-3 AAC

Sept. 2	Boise State	W	36-31
Sept. 11	Bethune-Cookman	W	63-14
Sept. 17	at Louisville	L	35-42
Oct. 2	at Navy	L	30-34
Oct. 9	East Carolina	W	20-16
Oct. 16	at Cincinnati	L	21-56
Oct. 22	Memphis	W	24-7
Oct. 30	at Temple	W	49-7
Nov. 6	Tulane	W	14-10
Nov. 13	at SMU	L	28-55
Nov. 20	UConn	W	49-17
Nov. 26	USF	W	17-13
Dec. 23	vs. Florida #	W	29-17

#Gasparilla Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	31.9 ppg	4	37
Rushing	196.3 ypg	2	28
Passing	206.2 ypg	8	91
Total	402.5 ypg	7	66

DEFENSE	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	24.5 ppg	3	49
Rushing	159.2 ypg	7	79
Passing	210.1 ypg	4	34
Total	369.3 ypg	4	53

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
+6	+0.46	3	31

STAT CORNER

5.14

The Knights scored 5.14 points per quality possession, 10th best in the nation. UCF scored TDs on 52 percent of quality possessions.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Mikey Keene, 272-173-1,730-6, 17 TDs
Rushing: Johnny Richardson, 104 att., 733 yds., 3 TDs
Receiving: Ryan O'Keefe, 84 rec., 812 yds., 7 TDs
Tackles: Quadric Bullard, 83
Sacks: Tre'mon Morris-Brash, 5.0
Interceptions: Dyllon Lester, Divaad Wilson, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Gus Malzahn
Record at School: 9-4 (1 year)
Career Record: 86-42 (10 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Chip Lindsey
Defensive Coordinator: Travis Williams
Location: Orlando, FL
Stadium: Bounce House (44,206)

OFFENSE After an injury to incumbent Dillon Gabriel last season, UCF head coach Gus Malzahn turned to true freshman Mikey Keene. He performed admirably, completing 64 percent of his passes for 1,730 yards, 17 TDs and six interceptions in guiding the Knights to a 7–3 record in their final 10 games, including a Gasparilla Bowl win against Florida. While Keene has the edge to retain the starting role, he will be pushed by John Rhys Plumlee, an Ole Miss transfer who is more of a running threat.

UCF boasts depth at running back, led by returning senior Isaiah Bowser, who carried the ball 159 times for 703 yards last season. Durability is a concern, although the big and bruising back is a game-changer when he's healthy. He'll be complemented by Johnny Richardson, who led the team with 733 rushing yards.

The speedy Ryan O'Keefe is a big-time offensive weapon capable of making plays in a variety of ways. He led the Knights with 84 receptions for 812 yards and seven TDs. The receivers are bolstered by senior Amari Johnson and Kobe Hudson, an incoming Auburn transfer who led the Tigers with 44 catches for 580 yards last season.

Kemore Gamble, a transfer from Florida, gives UCF a receiving threat at tight end. He was UF's third-leading receiver last season, catching 31 passes for 414 yards.

The line has lots of experience with returning starters Samuel Jackson, Matthew Lee and Lokahi Pauole. Transfer Ryan Swoboda was a multi-year starter at Virginia.

DEFENSE The unit took a big step in its first season under coordinator Travis Williams, improving its total defense numbers by 70 spots compared to the year before.

The strength is in the secondary. That group includes cornerbacks Davonte Brown (team-high 13 PBUs) and Corey Thornton (32 tackles, 2.5 TFLs, six PBUs) as well as safety Quadric Bullard (83 tackles, four TFLs, six PBUs). A name to watch at safety is transfer Koby Perry, an FCS All-American at Austin Peay.

There is experience on the edge with Tre'mon Morris-Brash (10 TFLs, 5.0 sacks) and Josh Celiscar (7.5 TFLs and 3.0 sacks). The interior is headlined by Ricky Barber, who has the ability to be among the best in the conference. A newcomer to watch is Lee Hunter, a former four-star recruit and Auburn transfer.

Linebacker is the biggest question. UCF turned to the transfer portal for help, bringing in Jason Johnson, who was an FCS All-American at Eastern Illinois.

SPECIALISTS Kicker Daniel Obarski finished strong, kicking three field goals in the bowl win against Florida to improve his season output to 8-of-14. Alex Ward was among the finalists for the Patrick Mannelly Award, given annually to the top long snapper in the country.

FINAL ANALYSIS Malzahn overcame a rash of injuries to put together a solid 9–4 season in his UCF debut. With 14 returning starters and a host of plug-and-play transfer additions, there is strong optimism that the Knights can leap back into conference championship contention.

RYAN O'KEEFE

UCF Athletics

> "They're better on defense than you think, but losing Dillon Gabriel and some of the offensive pieces will hurt. They're still transitioning. Honestly, it could go either way."
>
> —An opposing AAC assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Nikai Martinez, CB, Apopka, FL	★★★★
2	Quan Lee, WR, Gainesville, FL	★★★
3	Ja'Cari Henderson, CB, Sanford, FL	★★★
4	Keahnist Thompson, DL, Lakeland, FL	★★★
5	Thomas Castellanos, ATH, Waycross, GA	★★★
6	Xavier Townsend, RB, Tampa, FL	★★★
7	Demari Henderson, S, Sanford, FL	★★★
8	Jordan McDonald, RB, Alpharetta, GA	★★★
9	Tyler Griffin, ATH, Brooklet, GA	★★★
10	Jamaal Johnson, DL, Hollywood, FL	★★★

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	**4**	**Ryan O'Keefe (Sr.)**		Quan Lee (Fr.)
WR	17	Amari Johnson (Sr.)	15	Jordan Johnson (So.)
WR	2	Kobe Hudson (Jr.)	18	Jaylon Griffin (Jr.)
LT	71	Tylan Grable (Sr.)	69	Paul Rubelt (Sr.)
LG	**73**	**Samuel Jackson (Sr.)**	50	Patrick Barnett (So.)
C	**55**	**Matthew Lee (Jr.)**	73	Samuel Jackson (Sr.)
RG	**77**	**Lokahi Pauole (Sr.)**		John Harris (Sr.)
RT	72	Ryan Swoboda (Sr.)	70	Edward Collins (Sr.)
TE	8	Kemore Gamble (Sr.)	**82**	**Alec Holler (Sr.)**
QB	**13**	**Mikey Keene (So.)**	10	John Rhys Plumlee (Sr.)
RB	5	Isaiah Bowser (Sr.)	0	Johnny Richardson (Jr.)

DEFENSE (7)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	**88**	**Josh Celiscar (Jr.)**	13	Landon Woodson (Sr.)
DT	**5**	**Ricky Barber (Jr.)**	2	Lee Hunter (Fr.)
DT	94	Anthony Montalvo (Sr.)	**52**	**Keenan Hester (Jr.)**
DE	33	Tre'mon Morris-Brash (Sr.)	47	K.D. McDaniel (Jr.)
LB	11	Jeremiah Jean-Baptiste (Sr.)	28	Quade Mosier (Jr.)
LB		Jason Johnson (Jr.)	10	Terrence Lewis (Fr.)
CB	**7**	**Davonte Brown (Jr.)**	31	Brandon Adams (So.)
CB	14	Corey Thornton (Jr.)	0	Marco Domio (Sr.)
NB	**12**	**Justin Hodges (Jr.)**	**9**	**Divaad Wilson (Sr.)**
S	**37**	**Quadric Bullard (Jr.)**	29	William Wells (So.)
S	4	Koby Perry (Sr.)	18	Dyllon Lester (Sr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	98	Daniel Obarski (Sr.)	KR	4	Ryan O'Keefe (Sr.)
P	36	Andrew Osteen (Sr.)	PR	17	Amari Johnson (Sr.)

USF BULLS

National Forecast: 100 • AAC Prediction: 9 • Projected Record: 4-8, 3-5 AAC

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	BYU
Sept. 10	Howard
Sept. 17	at Florida
Sept. 24	at Louisville
Oct. 1	East Carolina
Oct. 8	at Cincinnati
Oct. 15	Tulane
Oct. 29	at Houston
Nov. 5	at Temple
Nov. 12	SMU
Nov. 18	at Tulsa
Nov. 25	UCF

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 2-10, 1-7 AAC

Sept. 2	at NC State	L	0-45
Sept. 11	Florida	L	20-42
Sept. 18	Florida A&M	W	38-17
Sept. 25	at BYU	L	27-35
Oct. 2	at SMU	L	17-41
Oct. 16	Tulsa	L	31-32
Oct. 23	Temple	W	34-14
Oct. 28	at East Carolina	L	14-29
Nov. 6	Houston	L	42-54
Nov. 12	Cincinnati	L	28-45
Nov. 20	at Tulane	L	14-45
Nov. 26	at UCF	L	13-17

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	23.2 ppg	9	100
Rushing	158.5 ypg	8	71
Passing	192.4 ypg	9	101
Total	350.9 ypg	9	102

DEFENSE	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	34.7 ppg	10	117
Rushing	207.2 ypg	10	118
Passing	263.3 ypg	9	113
Total	470.6 ypg	11	123

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
-4	-0.33	9	93

STAT CORNER

53.12%

USF ranked 129th in defensive passing efficiency, allowing a passing success rate of 53.12 percent. Opponents averaged 8.44 yards per dropback in 2021. The Bulls mustered only nine sacks on the season.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Timmy McClain, 262-145-1,888-7, 5 TDs
Rushing: Jaren Mangham, 160 att., 671 yds., 15 TDs
Receiving: Xavier Weaver, 41 rec., 715 yds., 2 TDs
Tackles: Antonio Grier, 92
Sacks: Antonio Grier, 3.0
Interceptions: Four players tied with 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Jeff Scott
Record at School: 3-18 (2 years)
Career Record: 3-18 (2 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Travis Trickett
Defensive Coordinator: Bob Shoop
Location: Tampa, FL
Stadium: Raymond James Stadium (65,618)

OFFENSE Jeff Scott's South Florida Bulls made some promising offensive strides in 2021. Now he's counting on the fast-paced attack mentality of first-year offensive coordinator Travis Trickett and transfer quarterback Gerry Bohanon, who arrives from Baylor after losing a hard-fought battle for the Bears' QB job. Bohanon passed for 2,200 yards and 18 TDs in helping Baylor to a 10–2 record last season. Jimmy Horn Jr. and Xavier Weaver are game-breaking receivers who comprise one of the AAC's most potent combinations. Now they are complemented by Clemson transfer Ajou Ajou, whose 6'3", 220-pound presence has turned heads.

It's the last go-round for center Brad Cecil, left guard Demetris Harris and left tackle Donovan Jennings, who have played side by side for most of the past four seasons. All told, the offensive line has a combined 136 career starts. That's good news for power back Jaren Mangham (team-leading 671 yards with 15 TDs), plus change-of-pace scatback options Brian Battie and Kelley Joiner Jr.

DEFENSE Veteran defensive coordinator Bob Shoop aims to improve a unit that ranked 123rd nationally and surrendered a startling average of 528.4 yards per game in nine of the team's 10 defeats. Shoop believes in applying constant pressure. "It's going to be a full-court press for 60 minutes — from the first snap of the game to the last snap of the game," he says.

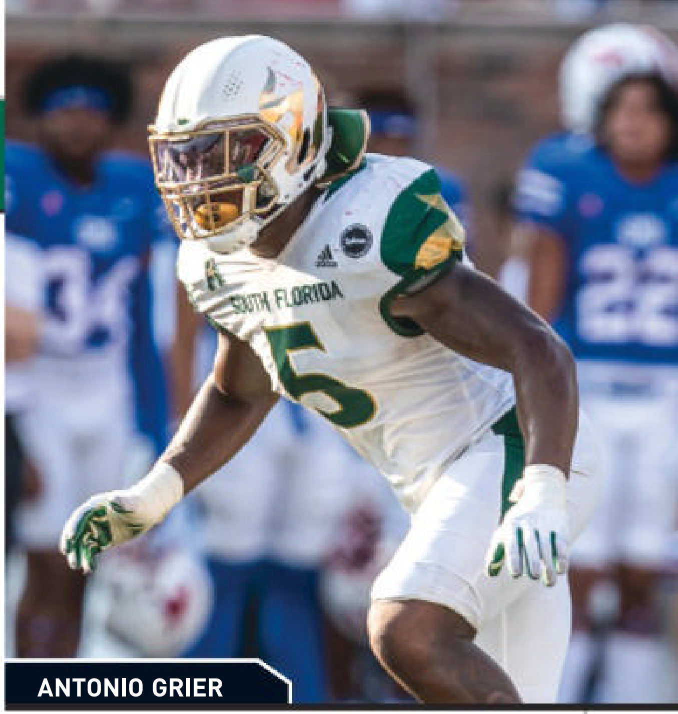
The Bulls are banking on transfers on the defensive line — Nick Bags (Temple), Jatorian Hansford (Missouri), James Ash (Wake Forest) and Clyde Pinder Jr. (North Carolina) — along with holdover senior Rashawn Yates, who had an excellent spring. Don't be surprised if true freshmen Michael Williams II and Eddie Kelly see significant time.

Linebackers Antonio Grier and Dwayne Boyles bring a combined 55 career starts into their senior seasons, but transfer DJ Gordon IV (Minnesota) will be a factor.

Last season, injuries haunted the secondary. Now, it's one of the team's deepest positions. The two best performers could be a pair of Kansas State transfers — lightning-quick Will Jones II and newcomer Aamaris Brown.

SPECIALISTS Battie became a consensus All-American with three kickoff returns for touchdowns, including two against Houston to tie an NCAA record. Placekicker Spencer Shrader, a Lou Groza Award semifinalist, was 11-for-13 in field-goal attempts. Australian punter Andrew Stokes averaged 39.0 yards in his first season of football.

FINAL ANALYSIS Scott, the former Clemson co-offensive coordinator, has defeated just one FBS opponent in two seasons, with an 0–11 record on the road. Still, progress has been made. There's an uptick in recruiting; a program-record 21 new players participated in spring ball. A $22 million indoor facility is ready this fall, and plans for an on-campus stadium are underway. Making a bowl game is a must — or else Scott's hot-seat setting goes from simmer to boil.


ANTONIO GRIER

USF Athletics

"They're going to improve and still be bad overall this season, but the depth is coming along. They just have to keep recruiting and try to keep their guys from going to the portal."

—An opposing AAC assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Michael Williams II, DL, West Bloomfield, MI	★★★
2	Jhalyn Shuler, LB, Abbeville, SC*	★★★
3	Eddie Kelly, DL, Winter Garden, FL	★★★
4	DeAunte Hunter, LB, Valdosta, GA	★★★
5	Byrum Brown, QB, Rolesville, NC	★★★
6	Jackson Long, TE, Hendersonville, TN	★★★
7	Javohn Thomas, WR, Tampa, FL	★★★
8	Gunnar Smith, QB, Lake Mary, FL	★★★
9	Jayson Littlejohn, TE, Hanford, CA*	★★★
10	Tony Newsome, CB, Winter Garden, FL	★★★

*junior college transfer

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (10)

WR	10	**Xavier Weaver (Jr.)**	6	Ajou Ajou (So.)
WR	5	Jimmy Horn Jr. (So.)	1	Khafre Brown (So.)
WR	4	**Omarion Dollison (So.)**	8	**Latrell Williams (Sr.)**
LT	73	**Donovan Jennings (Sr.)**	57	Joshua Blanchard (So.)
LG	64	**Demetris Harris (Sr.)**	70	Sebastian Sainterling (Sr.)
C	74	**Brad Cecil (Sr.)**	72	Cole Best (Fr.)
RG	79	**Dustyn Hall (So.)**	65	Mike Lofton (Fr.)
RT	67	**Demontrey Jacobs (Sr.)**	76	Derrell Bailey Jr. (So.)
TE	88	Chris Carter (Jr.)	87	Gunnar Greenwald (So.)
QB		Gerry Bohanon (Jr.)	9	**Timmy McClain (So.)**
RB	0	**Jaren Mangham (Sr.)**	3	Kelley Joiner Jr. (Jr.)

DEFENSE (8)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	40	**Jason Vaughn (Jr.)**	13	Tramel Logan (So.)
DT	91	Rashawn Yates (Sr.)	99	Clyde Pinder Jr. (So.)
DT	90	Rashad Cheney Jr. (So.)	10	Nick Bags (So.)
DE	28	Jatorian Hansford (Sr.)		Michael Williams II (Fr.)
MLB	5	**Antonio Grier (Sr.)**	8	DJ Gordon IV (So.)
OLB	11	**Dwayne Boyles (Sr.)**	9	Davon Hicks (So.)
CB	0	**Daquan Evans (Jr.)**	23	Aamaris Brown (Fr.)
CB	2	**TJ Robinson (So.)**	4	Christian Williams (Jr.)
NB	3	**Vincent Davis (Sr.)**	7	Will Jones II (So.)
SS	1	**Matthew Hill (Jr.)**	33	Timarcus Simpson (Jr.)
FS	22	**Mekhi LaPointe (Sr.)**	18	Ray Thornton III (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	32	Spencer Shrader (Jr.)	KR	21	Brian Battie (So.)
P	36	Andrew Stokes (So.)	PR	10	Xavier Weaver (Jr.)

ACC PREVIEW

ATLANTIC DIVISION
PREDICTED ORDER OF FINISH

1	CLEMSON **TIGERS**	12-1, 7-1
2	NC STATE **WOLFPACK**	10-2, 6-2
3	WAKE FOREST **DEMON DEACONS**	9-3, 5-3
4	FLORIDA STATE **SEMINOLES**	7-5, 5-3
5	BOSTON COLLEGE **EAGLES**	7-5, 4-4
6	LOUISVILLE **CARDINALS**	6-6, 3-5
7	SYRACUSE **ORANGE**	6-6, 3-5

COASTAL DIVISION
PREDICTED ORDER OF FINISH

1	MIAMI **HURRICANES**	9-4, 6-2
2	PITTSBURGH **PANTHERS**	9-3, 6-2
3	NORTH CAROLINA **TAR HEELS**	7-5, 4-4
4	VIRGINIA TECH **HOKIES**	6-6, 3-5
5	VIRGINIA **CAVALIERS**	5-7, 2-6
6	GEORGIA TECH **YELLOW JACKETS**	3-9, 2-6
7	DUKE **BLUE DEVILS**	2-10, 0-8

Games to Watch

West Virginia at Pittsburgh, Sept. 1
Florida State vs. LSU (New Orleans), Sept. 4
Miami at Texas A&M, Sept. 17
Clemson at Wake Forest, Sept. 24
NC State at Clemson, Oct. 1
Clemson at Notre Dame, Nov. 5
Florida State at Miami, Nov. 5
Wake Forest at NC State, Nov. 5
Miami at Clemson, Nov. 19
Florida at Florida State, Nov. 25
NC State at North Carolina, Nov. 25
Pittsburgh at Miami, Nov. 26

MYLES MURPHY

Al Kooistra

ACC Championship:
Clemson over Miami

Recruiting by School

1. Clemson
2. North Carolina
3. Miami
4. Florida State
5. Virginia Tech
6. Boston College
7. Duke
8. Georgia Tech
9. Louisville
10. NC State
11. Virginia
12. Syracuse
13. Wake Forest
14. Pittsburgh

ALL-ACC TEAM

FIRST-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	**Sam Hartman**	Jr.	Wake Forest
RB	**Sean Tucker**	So.	Syracuse
RB	**Will Shipley**	So.	Clemson
WR	**A.T. Perry**	Jr.	Wake Forest
WR	**Josh Downs**	Jr.	North Carolina
WR	**Jordan Addison**	Jr.	Pittsburgh
TE	**Marshon Ford**	Jr.	Louisville
C	**Grant Gibson**	Sr.	NC State
OL	**Jordan McFadden**	Sr.	Clemson
OL	**Caleb Chandler**	Sr.	Louisville
OL	**Christian Mahogany**	Jr.	Boston College
OL	**Zion Nelson**	Jr.	Miami

FIRST-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	**Calijah Kancey**	Jr.	Pittsburgh
DL	**Myles Murphy**	Jr.	Clemson
DL	**Bryan Bresee**	So.	Clemson
DL	**Tyler Davis**	Sr.	Clemson
LB	**Trenton Simpson**	Jr.	Clemson
LB	**Mikel Jones**	Jr.	Syracuse
LB	**Payton Wilson**	Jr.	NC State
LB	**Drake Thomas**	Jr.	NC State
CB	**Kei'Trel Clark**	Jr.	Louisville
CB	**Josh DeBerry**	Sr.	Boston College
S	**Jammie Robinson**	Jr.	Florida State
S	**Andrew Mukuba**	So.	Clemson

FIRST-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	**B.T. Potter**	Sr.	Clemson
KR	**Jaylen Stinson**	Jr.	Duke
P	**Lou Hedley**	Sr.	Miami
PR	**Jordan Addison**	Jr.	Pittsburgh

SECOND-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	**Devin Leary**	Jr.	NC State
RB	**Pat Garwo III**	Jr.	Boston College
RB	**Jaylan Knighton**	So.	Miami
AP	**Keytaon Thompson**	Sr.	Virginia
WR	**Dontayvion Wicks**	Jr.	Virginia
WR	**Zay Flowers**	Sr.	Boston College
TE	**Will Mallory**	Sr.	Miami
C	**Michael Jurgens**	Jr.	Wake Forest
OL	**Sean Maginn**	Sr.	Wake Forest
OL	**Carter Warren**	Sr.	Pittsburgh
OL	**DJ Scaife Jr.**	Sr.	Miami
OL	**Matthew Bergeron**	Jr.	Syracuse

SECOND-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	**Cory Durden**	Sr.	NC State
DL	**Rondell Bothroyd**	Jr.	Wake Forest
DL	**Habakkuk Baldonado**	Sr.	Pittsburgh
DL	**Myles Murphy**	Jr.	North Carolina
DL	**Xavier Thomas**	Sr.	Clemson
LB	**Yasir Abdullah**	Sr.	Louisville
LB	**Nick Jackson**	Sr.	Virginia
LB	**SirVocea Dennis**	Sr.	Pittsburgh
CB	**Tyrique Stevenson**	Jr.	Miami
CB	**Duce Chestnut**	So.	Syracuse
S	**Brandon Hill**	Jr.	Pittsburgh
S	**Tanner Ingle**	Sr.	NC State

SECOND-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	**Andres Borregales**	So.	Miami
KR	**Trebor Pena**	So.	Syracuse
P	**Peter Moore**	So.	Virginia Tech
PR	**Taylor Morin**	So.	Wake Forest

THIRD-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	**Brennan Armstrong**	Sr.	Virginia
RB	**Malachi Thomas**	So.	Virginia Tech
RB	**Israel Abanikanda**	Jr.	Pittsburgh
WR	**Thayer Thomas**	Sr.	NC State
WR	**Key'Shawn Smith**	So.	Miami
WR	**Taylor Morin**	So.	Wake Forest
TE	**Gavin Bartholomew**	So.	Pittsburgh
C	**Owen Drexel**	Sr.	Pittsburgh
OL	**Graham Barton**	Jr.	Duke
OL	**Dillan Gibbons**	Sr.	Florida State
OL	**Marcus Minor**	Sr.	Pittsburgh
OL	**Kaden Moore**	So.	Virginia Tech

THIRD-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	**DeWayne Carter**	Jr.	Duke
DL	**Leonard Taylor**	So.	Miami
DL	**Fabien Lovett**	Jr.	Florida State
DL	**Robert Cooper**	Sr.	Florida State
LB	**Charlie Thomas**	Sr.	Georgia Tech
LB	**Dax Hollifield**	Sr.	Virginia Tech
LB	**Shaka Heyward**	Sr.	Duke
LB	**Isaiah Moore**	Sr.	NC State
CB	**Omarion Cooper**	So.	Florida State
CB	**Caelen Carson**	So.	Wake Forest
S	**Chamarri Conner**	Sr.	Virginia Tech
S	**Jaiden Woodbey**	Sr.	Boston College

THIRD-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	**Sam Scarton**	Jr.	Pittsburgh
KR	**Will Shipley**	So.	Clemson
P	**Alex Mastromanno**	So.	Florida State
PR	**Thayer Thomas**	Sr.	NC State

Note: WR Jordan Addison was in the transfer portal at the time of publication

2022 BOWL PROJECTIONS

Cheez-It Bowl
Miami vs. Oklahoma
Duke's Mayo Bowl
Florida State vs. Penn State
Fenway Bowl
Syracuse vs. SMU
Gasparilla Bowl
Louisville vs. Auburn
Gator Bowl
Pittsburgh vs. Florida
Holiday Bowl
Wake Forest vs. UCLA
Military Bowl
Virginia Tech vs. East Carolina
Pinstripe Bowl
North Carolina vs. Purdue
Sun Bowl
Boston College vs. Oregon State
Orange Bowl
NC State vs. Notre Dame
Fiesta Bowl (CFP Semifinal)
Clemson vs. Alabama

2021 STANDINGS

Atlantic	**ACC**	**Overall**
Wake Forest	7-1	11-3
NC State	6-2	9-3
Clemson	6-2	10-3
Louisville	4-4	6-7
Florida State	4-4	5-7
Syracuse	2-6	5-7
Boston College	2-6	6-6

Coastal	**ACC**	**Overall**
Pittsburgh	7-1	11-3
Miami	5-3	7-5
Virginia Tech	4-4	6-7
Virginia	4-4	6-6
North Carolina	3-5	6-7
Georgia Tech	2-6	3-9
Duke	0-8	3-9

2021 BOWL RESULTS

First Responder Bowl
Air Force 31, Louisville 28
Pinstripe Bowl
Maryland 54, Virginia Tech 10
Cheez-It Bowl
Clemson 20, Iowa State 13
Duke's Mayo Bowl
South Carolina 38, North Carolina 21
Peach Bowl
Michigan State 31, Pitt 21
Gator Bowl
Wake Forest 38, Rutgers 10
Holiday Bowl
NC State vs. UCLA (canceled)
Fenway Bowl
Virginia vs. SMU (canceled)
Military Bowl
Boston Coll. vs. East Car. (canceled)

BOSTON COLLEGE EAGLES

National Forecast: 43 • ACC Atlantic Prediction: 5 • Projected Record: 7-5, 4-4 ACC

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Jeff Hafley
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 12-11 (2 years)
CAREER RECORD: 12-11 (2 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: John McNulty
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tem Lukabu
LOCATION: Chestnut Hill, MA
STADIUM: Alumni Stadium (44,500)

KEY EAGLES

PHIL JURKOVEC, QB A dual-threat quarterback who is back to prove why he could be a first- or second-day NFL Draft selection.

ZAY FLOWERS, WR Expected to be BC's first wide receiver draftee since 1987. He has 13 receptions of 40-plus yards since 2020 and led the ACC in touchdown catches two years ago.

JOSH DEBERRY, NB Arguably the Eagles' most valuable defensive player. He slid inside and posted the highest Pro Football Focus coverage grade (79.2) of any Eagle last season.

KEY LOSSES

ZION JOHNSON, LT As versatile as an offensive lineman gets. He started full seasons at left tackle and left guard in college.

BRANDON SEBASTIAN, CB A four-year starter on the outside with a nose for the ball. He was tied for first in the ACC last year with four interceptions in only nine games.

ISAIAH GRAHAM-MOBLEY, LB Transferred to BC after a five-year career at Temple and — although he couldn't avoid the injury bug — was the Eagles' leader in the second level last year.

RISING STAR

Running back **XAVIER COLEMAN** turned heads last spring as a true freshman, but a knee injury set him back. He preserved his redshirt and is poised for a more impactful 2022. Coleman is expected to be used both in the backfield and out wide.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Sione Hala, S, Bellflower, CA	★★★★
2	Joseph Griffin Jr., WR, Springfield, WA	★★★★
3	Kwan Williams, DL, Owings Mills, MD	★★★
4	Matthew Ragan, TE, Groton, MA	★★★
5	Peter Delaportas, QB, Oak Ridge, NJ	★★★
6	Amari Jackson, CB, McDonough, GA	★★★
7	Edwin Kolenge, LB, Windsor, CT	★★★
8	Jeremiah Franklin, TE, Walkersville, MD	★★★
9	Jude Bowry, OT, Baltimore, MD	★★★
10	Ismael Zamor, WR, Everett, MA	★★★
11	Gilbert Tongrongou, DL, Woodbridge, VA	★★★
12	Cam Barfield, RB, Las Vegas, NV	★★★
13	Alex Broome, RB, Nashville, TN	★★★
14	Jack Funke, OT, Westwood, MA	★★★
15	Joshua Hardy, Edge, Severn, MD	★★★
16	Clive Wilson, DL, Youngstown, OH	★★★
17	Daveon Crouch, LB, Tampa, FL	★★★
18	Kivon Wright, DL, Manvel, TX	★★★
19	CJ Clinkscales, ATH, Buford, GA	★★★
20	Noah Clifford, OT, Oakdale, CT	★★★
21	Isaiah Farris, CB, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	★★★
22	Sam Candotti, P, Melbourne, Aus.	★★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite

Last season, everything was lining up perfectly for Boston College. Coming off an impressive first year under head coach Jeff Hafley, the Eagles were returning a combined 18 starters on offense and defense. They had a cakewalk of a non-conference schedule, and the Atlantic Division was actually winnable.

Then Phil Jurkovec, BC's best quarterback prospect since Matt Ryan, suffered a season-threatening fracture to his throwing hand in Week 2 at UMass. Although longtime backup Dennis Grosel led the Eagles to their first 4–0 start in 14 years, their four-game win streak was followed by four straight defeats in which BC averaged a meager 10 points per contest against ACC opponents.

Jurkovec made an unexpected return for the final four games of the season, helping the Eagles clinch bowl eligibility for the sixth year in a row, but BC finished 2–6 in conference competition and didn't even get to play in the Military Bowl because of COVID-19 complications and player opt-outs.

Jurkovec is back for one final year, as is star wide receiver Zay Flowers. They're the faces of a program that's trying to break the shackles of ACC mediocrity. BC hasn't had an eight-plus-win season since 2009. And, while Hafley's recruiting success — which has included back-to-back top-40 classes — has been a shot in the arm, the honeymoon phase of his hire is over. The pressure's on in Year 3.

OFFENSE BC operated out of a pro-style offense the last two years. Those days are over. Offensive coordinator Frank Cignetti Jr. was hired away by Pittsburgh, and now former Notre Dame tight ends coach and two-time Rutgers OC John McNulty is running the show on the Heights. McNulty's offense figures to include a mix of college and NFL components with run-pass options, quick releases and progression-based reads as well as a variety of personnel packages, including some spread.

BC needed change. A year removed from ranking third in the ACC in passing offense, the Eagles were 12th in 2021. What's more, BC averaged 11.8 fewer points per game against conference foes last season than it did in 2020. The one thing the Eagles had going for them was a much-improved rushing attack, which featured running back Pat Garwo III. As a redshirt sophomore, Garwo went from being fourth on the depth chart to becoming BC's bell cow and the 19th Eagle in history to rush for more than 1,000 yards in a season.

He'll be without four of his five primarily blockers this season, however. Right guard Christian Mahogany is the Eagles' lone returning starter up front. How well the new-look offensive line plays could dictate BC's success in 2022. It's a group that will have to give Jurkovec enough time to get the ball to dynamic receivers like Flowers, sophomore Jaden Williams and redshirt senior Jaelen Gill.

DEFENSE Along with McNulty, BC has three new offensive assistants. Defensively, however, the Eagles boast

PHIL JURKOVEC

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Rutgers
Sept. 10	at Virginia Tech
Sept. 17	Maine
Sept. 24	at Florida State
Oct. 1	Louisville
Oct. 8	Clemson
Oct. 22	at Wake Forest
Oct. 29	at UConn
Nov. 4	Duke
Nov. 12	at NC State
Nov. 19	at Notre Dame
Nov. 26	Syracuse

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 6-6, 2-6 ACC

Sept. 4	Colgate	W	51-0
Sept. 11	at UMass	W	45-28
Sept. 18	at Temple	W	28-3
Sept. 25	Missouri (ot)	W	41-34
Oct. 2	at Clemson	L	13-19
Oct. 16	NC State	L	7-33
Oct. 23	at Louisville	L	14-28
Oct. 30	at Syracuse	L	6-21
Nov. 5	Virginia Tech	W	17-3
Nov. 13	at Georgia Tech	W	41-30
Nov. 20	Florida State	L	23-26
Nov. 27	Wake Forest	L	10-41

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	ACC	NATIONAL
Scoring	24.7 ppg	11	93
Rushing	165.2 ypg	9	59
Passing	184.8 ypg	12	106
Total	350.1 ypg	14	103

DEFENSE	PER GAME	ACC	NATIONAL
Scoring	22.2 ppg	3	31
Rushing	170.8 ypg	9	92
Passing	173.5 ypg	1	3
Total	344.2 ypg	4	28

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	ACC	NATIONAL
-1	-0.08	9	74

BC Football

the same staff they've had each of the past two seasons. That side of the ball has seen steady growth, particularly against the pass. In 2019, the season before Hafley took over, BC ranked 122nd in pass defense. Last year, the Eagles climbed all the way to third nationally in that category, allowing a mere 173.5 yards per game through the air. BC was tied for 16th in the country in fewest passing touchdowns allowed (14) and tied for 27th in the FBS in opponent completion percentage (57.9).

BC returns most of its starters from last year's secondary, including star nickel Josh DeBerry and strong safety Jaiden Woodbey, who was All-ACC honorable mention. At the second level, veteran Vinny DePalma will likely replace Isaiah Graham-Mobley at middle linebacker in BC's 4-2-5 base. He'll be joined by Kam Arnold, with Bryce Steele getting a good bit of run, too, following an impressive true freshman season.

Teams ran on the Eagles more than they went to the air last year because BC ranked 92nd in rushing defense, giving up 170.8 yards per game on the ground. Generating a pass rush was the unit's biggest issue in 2021, though. The Eagles were tied for 96th in sacks per game (1.75). If they can't shore up those two areas, it won't matter how good they are on the back end.

SPECIALISTS Placekicker Connor Lytton was thrown into the fire last season after returning starter Aaron Boumerhi suffered a season-ending hip injury. Lytton and kickoff specialist Danny Longman battled to be Boumerhi's replacement, but Lytton got the call before halftime against Missouri in Week 4, and the true freshman drilled a 49-yarder. Lytton went on to make 11-of-12 field goal attempts and all 25 of his extra points. As for the punter position, BC has to replace four-year starter Grant Carlson. Longman and Australian true freshman Sam Candotti are competing for that role.

FINAL ANALYSIS We'll know a lot about what kind of team BC has after four weeks. The Eagles' 2022 opener against Rutgers is no gimme, and then they travel to Virginia Tech and Florida State for two of their next three games. If BC can dodge the injury bug this season, and Jurkovec plays to his maximum potential, Hafley's bunch could finally reach the eight-win barrier. Winning the division, however, will be a stiff test. But even just stealing a game or two against AP-ranked teams — a caliber of opponent BC hasn't defeated since 2014 — would be considered the kind of step in the right direction Eagles fans desperately crave.

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	28.1	89
Defense	29.2	75
Margin	-1.1	81
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	41.4%	78
Defense	43.0%	78
Margin	-1.6%	88
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	5.4	94
Defense	5.5	54
Margin	-0.1	82
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.1	69
Defense	3.5	24
Margin	+0.6	35
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	+0.3	66
Actual	-1	71
Margin	-1.3	82

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

-0.073

Boston College's offense averaged -0.073 EPA/pass on 276 dropbacks, 103rd in the nation. Combined with a 112th-best passing success rate of 33.7 percent, the Eagles had one of the worst passing offenses in the P5.

36.9%

Boston College held opponents to a 39.6 percent third-down success rate in 2021, 17th among FBS defenses.

4.01

At 4.01 points per quality possession, Boston College's offense ranked 106th in finishing drives, despite a 47 percent quality possession rate that ranked 71st in the FBS.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

WR	**4**	**Zay Flowers (Sr.)**	9	Dante Reynolds (Fr.)
WR	0	Jaden Williams (So.)	84	Taji Johnson (Jr.)
WR	1	Jaelen Gill (Sr.)	11	Lewis Bond (Fr.)
LT	67	Jack Conley (Jr.)	77	Jude Bowry (Fr.)
LG	74	Finn Dirstine (Sr.)	58	Blerim Rustemi (Jr.)
C	66	Drew Kendall (Fr.)	78	Jackson Ness (Jr.)
RG	**73**	**Christian Mahogany (Jr.)**	62	Otto Hess (Fr.)
RT	70	Ozzy Trapilo (So.)	79	Kevin Cline (So.)
TE	**16**	**Joey Luchetti (Sr.)**	80	George Takacs (Sr.)
QB	**5**	**Phil Jurkovec (Sr.)**	14	Emmett Morehead (Fr.)
RB	**24**	**Pat Garwo III (Jr.)**	6	Alec Sinkfield (Sr.)

DEFENSE (7)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	6	Donovan Ezeiruaku (So.)	**97**	**Marcus Valdez (Sr.)**
DT	93	Chibueze Onwuka (Sr.)	92	Izaiah Henderson (Jr.)
DT	**96**	**Cam Horsley (Jr.)**	13	Khris Banks (Sr.)
DE	11	Shitta Sillah (Sr.)	90	Ty Clemons (Fr.)
MLB	42	Vinny DePalma (Sr.)	2	Bryce Steele (So.)
SLB	**5**	**Kam Arnold (Jr.)**	8	Jaylen Blackwell (Fr.)
CB	**20**	**Elijah Jones (Sr.)**	24	Amari Jackson (Fr.)
CB	1	CJ Burton (So.)	14	Jalon Williams (Fr.)
NB	**21**	**Josh DeBerry (Sr.)**	**3**	**Jason Maitre (Sr.)**
SS	**9**	**Jaiden Woodbey (Sr.)**	35	Jalen Williams (Jr.)
FS	23	Cole Batson (Fr.)	30	Steve Lubischer (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	90	Connor Lytton (So.)	**KR**	7	Xavier Coleman (Fr.)
P	99	Danny Longman (Sr.)	**PR**	1	Jaelen Gill (Sr.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	**ATT**	**COMP**	**YDS**	**TD**	**INT**
Dennis Grosel	192	111	1,216	6	7
Phil Jurkovec	**96**	**52**	**915**	**7**	**4**
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Pat Garwo III	**205**	**1,045**	**5.1**	**7**	
Phil Jurkovec	**50**	**322**	**6.4**	**5**	
Alec Sinkfield	**85**	**350**	**4.1**	**2**	
Travis Levy	56	184	3.3	4	
Dennis Grosel	44	69	1.6	2	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Zay Flowers	**44**	**746**	**17.0**	**5**	
Jaelen Gill	**24**	**269**	**11.2**	**1**	
Trae Berry	21	362	17.2	4	
Jaden Williams	**19**	**213**	**11.2**	**3**	
Travis Levy	16	148	9.3	0	

KICKING: **Connor Lytton, 11-12 FGs, 58 pts.**
TACKLES: **Kam Arnold, 61; Jaiden Woodbey, 56**
SACKS: **Marcus Valdez, 5.0**
INTERCEPTIONS: Brandon Sebastian, 4

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE EAGLES

Opposing Coaches Size Up Boston College

"The quarterback [Phil Jurkovec] coming back is obviously huge, but don't sleep on the defense. He's [Jeff Hafley] finally got some guys that look like they can play with the top half of the league. …What they're doing developmentally is what Georgia Tech should've done: a former DC who recruits guys based on relationships; don't worry about outside attention or rankings, and be selective in the portal, and then develop them quietly. … This defense will be good. The more time they get and the more they can cycle their guys in, they're going to be better than they've been. Year 3, you'll see more looks, more creative stuff. Watch out. … The quarterback going out so early changed their entire season. He could be really, really special if he stays healthy this season, but he's got the tag now as a health concern. If he plays through a whole season, he could look like Kenny Pickett. … I'd worry more about the turnover on the line than the new OC. He's got another former NFL guy in John McNulty, so I'm betting you're gonna see another two-tight end, pro-style attack. They turned over the entire offensive staff almost, but I don't think it's gonna change what Jeff wants to do at all. So they're gonna go focus on good tight ends like the kid [George Takacs] they just got from Notre Dame. Keep your linemen deep, hope you land on a good quarterback now and then and support your defense. His plan is easy to see, but it's the right one."

CLEMSON TIGERS

National Forecast: 4 • ACC Atlantic Prediction: 1 • Projected Record: 12-1, 7-1 ACC

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Dabo Swinney
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 150-36 (13+ years)
CAREER RECORD: 150-36 (13+ years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Brandon Streeter
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Wes Goodwin
LOCATION: Clemson, SC
STADIUM: Clemson Memorial Stadium (81,500)

KEY TIGERS

WILL SHIPLEY, RB Shipley finished with 11 rushing TDs — the second most by a Clemson true freshman in school history, behind only Travis Etienne. He's fast, powerful and a leader.

MYLES MURPHY, DE Murphy led Clemson in tackles for a loss (14) and sacks (seven) last season and should be even better as a junior. He'll get plenty of one-on-one opportunities thanks to all the talent around him.

TRENTON SIMPSON, LB Simpson has been compared to former top-10 draft pick Isaiah Simmons since he arrived on campus. He's always around the ball.

KEY LOSSES

ANDREW BOOTH JR., CB Booth was one of the best cornerbacks in the country last season and was a player Clemson trusted on an island to lock down his man.

JUSTYN ROSS, WR Ross didn't have the All-America season he was hoping for, but he did lead the Tigers in receptions (46) and yards (514) while adding three touchdowns.

MARIO GOODRICH, CB It may seem strange to put two cornerbacks in this group, but Goodrich was every bit as good as Booth last season from an advanced stats standpoint. Both players earned first-team All-ACC honors.

RISING STAR

True freshman cornerback **TORIANO PRIDE JR.** had a great spring and will be counted on to play right away, as the Tigers are thin at cornerback. Pride is fast, physical and confident.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Cade Klubnik, QB, Austin, TX	★★★★★
2	Jeadyn Lukus, CB, Mauldin, SC	★★★★★
3	Antonio Williams, WR, Irmo, SC	★★★★
4	Toriano Pride Jr., CB, East St. Louis, IL	★★★★
5	Adam Randall, WR, Myrtle Beach, SC	★★★★
6	Collin Sadler, OT, Greenville, SC	★★★★
7	Sherrod Covil Jr., S, Chesapeake, VA	★★★★
8	Blake Miller, OT, Strongsville, OH	★★★★
9	Caden Story, DL, Lanett, AL	★★★★
10	T.J. Dudley, LB, Montgomery, AL	★★★★
11	Wade Woodaz, S, Tampa, FL	★★★
12	Myles Oliver, CB, Douglasville, GA	★★★
13	Kylon Griffin, S, Montgomery, AL	★★★
14	Kobe McCloud, LB, Tampa, FL	★★★
15	Josh Sapp, TE, Greenville, SC	★★★
16	Jahiem Lawson, DL, Central, SC	★★★
17	Cole Turner, WR, Birmingham, AL	★★★
18	Keith Adams Jr., RB, St. George, UT	★★★
19	Robert Gunn III, K, Largo, FL	★★★
20	Jack Smith, P, Saraland, AL	★★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite

For the first time in more than a decade, Clemson is coming off a season that was truly a disappointment.

The Tigers went 10–3 and had their streak of six consecutive ACC titles and six consecutive College Football Playoff berths come to an abrupt end. Clemson spent this offseason working to get its offense back on track and trying to get healthy, as those were the main two factors that led to struggles last year.

Dabo Swinney feels good about where his team is heading into 2022.

"The guys that we think are going to be dominant players, they've been what we need all spring. And then the guys that we needed to really mature and grow and get better, we were able to do that this spring," Swinney says. "When we put it together, I think we've got a chance to be a really good football team around here."

OFFENSE In order for Clemson to get back to the College Football Playoff, its offense is going to have to take a huge step forward. Everything starts with quarterback DJ Uiagalelei, who struggled in his first full season as a starter.

Expectations were high for Uiagalelei coming into the 2021 season after he impressed in starts against Boston College and Notre Dame as a freshman, but he was inaccurate and made poor decisions far too often last season. Uiagalelei entered the year as one of the Heisman favorites but finished the year with more interceptions (10) than touchdown passes (nine). The California native completed only 55.6 percent of his passes, which ranked No. 98 nationally. As a team, Clemson's passing offense was No. 103 nationally in yards per game.

"We've got to get some confidence in the passing game, and we lost our confidence last year," Tigers tight ends coach and passing game coordinator Kyle Richardson says. "Once we lost it, it was hard to get it back. We've made some tweaks."

Richardson and first-year offensive coordinator Brandon Streeter are working with Uiagalelei to make him more comfortable. The junior is being pushed by five-star freshman Cade Klubnik, although Swinney is on the record saying that, as of now, this is Uiagalelei's job.

While Uiagalelei had his share of struggles in 2021, the rest of the unit had problems as well. The offensive line was inconsistent, particularly early in the year. And the backs and receivers had a hard time staying healthy.

The Tigers do return their top three running backs in Will Shipley, Kobe Pace and Phil Mafah. The offensive line returns four starters and should be improved.

As far as pass-catchers, tight end Davis Allen is a player to watch. He could emerge as one of the top tight ends in the country. At receiver, Beaux Collins and Joseph Ngata are the top two guys. Clemson has plenty of talent behind them, but it's unproven.

DEFENSE Despite the loss of longtime coordinator Brent Venables (hired as Oklahoma's head coach), this should be one of the best defenses in the country.

WILL SHIPLEY

Al Kooistra

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 5	at Georgia Tech
Sept. 10	Furman
Sept. 17	Louisiana Tech
Sept. 24	at Wake Forest
Oct. 1	NC State
Oct. 8	at Boston College
Oct. 15	at Florida State
Oct. 22	Syracuse
Nov. 5	at Notre Dame
Nov. 12	Louisville
Nov. 19	Miami (Fla.)
Nov. 26	South Carolina

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 10-3, 6-2 ACC

Sept. 4	vs. Georgia #	L	3-10
Sept. 11	South Carolina State	W	49-3
Sept. 18	Georgia Tech	W	14-8
Sept. 25	at NC State (ot)	L	21-27
Oct. 2	Boston College	W	19-13
Oct. 15	at Syracuse	W	17-14
Oct. 23	at Pittsburgh	L	17-27
Oct. 30	Florida State	W	30-20
Nov. 6	at Louisville	W	30-24
Nov. 13	UConn	W	44-7
Nov. 20	Wake Forest	W	48-27
Nov. 27	at South Carolina	W	30-0
Dec. 29	vs. Iowa State %	W	20-13

#Charlotte, NC %Cheez-It Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	ACC	NATIONAL
Scoring	26.3 ppg	9	82
Rushing	167.9 ypg	8	58
Passing	191.2 ypg	11	103
Total	359.1 ypg	13	100

DEFENSE	PER GAME	ACC	NATIONAL
Scoring	14.8 ppg	1	2
Rushing	96.3 ypg	2	7
Passing	213.9 ypg	4	40
Total	310.2 ypg	1	8

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	ACC	NATIONAL
+2	+0.15	4	53

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	30.9	23
Defense	26.0	9
Margin	+4.9	10
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	40.7%	84
Defense	35.8%	4
Margin	+4.9%	37
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	5.3	102
Defense	4.5	3
Margin	+0.8	44
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.0	83
Defense	2.6	2
Margin	+1.4	5
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	+2.3	41
Actual	+1	57
Margin	-1.3	81

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

-0.160

Clemson's defense had another stellar year, holding opponents to -0.160 EPA/rush (third in the FBS) and a 31.7 percent rushing success rate (sixth).

-0.123

The Tigers' passing offense stalled all season, averaging -0.123 EPA/pass, 114th in the FBS, and a 35.7 percent passing success rate, 107th in the nation.

3.94

When Clemson's offense had quality possessions (45.3 percent quality possession rate, 79th in the nation), the Tigers struggled to finish them, averaging 3.94 points per quality possession, ranking in the bottom 20 of the FBS.

First-year defensive coordinator Wes Goodwin has elite talent all over the field to work with, but everything starts with the defensive front. Swinney believes that seven defensive linemen will be drafted next year, and he very well could be right.

At end, Myles Murphy, Xavier Thomas, K.J. Henry and Justin Mascoll are all starter-level players. At tackle, Tyler Davis and Bryan Bresee are two of the best in the country, while Ruke Orhorhoro, Tre Williams and Payton Page will provide depth. This has the chance to be the best defensive front Clemson has ever had.

Clemson lost a couple of experienced linebackers in James Skalski and Baylon Spector, but the Tigers should be more athletic at the position as a group.

Trenton Simpson and Barrett Carter are two of the best athletes on Clemson's team. Simpson, in particular, could be an All-American this season after recording 64 tackles, 12 tackles for a loss and six sacks in 2021. The North Carolina native is moving inside the box for his junior season.

On the back end, Clemson has to replace three very good starters in Andrew Booth Jr., Mario Goodrich and Nolan Turner. If there's a question mark on this unit, it's at cornerback, where the Tigers are talented but inexperienced.

Clemson ranked eighth nationally in total defense last season, allowing 310.2 yards per game. It wouldn't be a surprise to see the Tigers post even better numbers on that side of the ball this year.

SPECIALISTS B.T. Potter is back for a fifth season and should be one of the best kickers in the country this year. Potter has a huge leg and was 21-of-26 on field goals last season. He holds the school record for field goals of 40-plus yards and 50-plus yards for a career. Potter could handle punting duties as well. He worked at punter this spring and was impressive.

As for the return game, Clemson has several athletes who could get a look. Shipley and Collins are a couple of guys to keep an eye on.

FINAL ANALYSIS This defense is good enough to win a national title. Everything comes down to the offense. The running game should be dependable, as the Tigers have a three-headed monster at running back and an experienced offensive line. But Uiagalelei is going to have to make some plays in the passing game for Clemson to have the year it wants to have. If he struggles early, it's certainly possible Klubnik gets a look.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

WR	**10**	**Joseph Ngata (Sr.)**	3	Dacari Collins (So.)
WR	80	Beaux Collins (So.)	6	E.J. Williams (Jr.)
WR	13	Brannon Spector (Jr.)		Antonio Williams (Fr.)
LT	**71**	**Jordan McFadden (Sr.)**	70	Tristan Leigh (Fr.)
LG	**74**	**Marcus Tate (So.)**	76	John Williams (So.)
C	**56**	**Will Putnam (Sr.)**	75	Trent Howard (So.)
RG	77	Mitchell Mayes (Jr.)	59	Dietrick Pennington (Fr.)
RT	**64**	**Walker Parks (Jr.)**	78	Blake Miller (Fr.)
TE	**84**	**Davis Allen (Sr.)**	9	Jake Briningstool (So.)
QB	**5**	**DJ Uiagalelei (Jr.)**	2	Cade Klubnik (Fr.)
RB	1	Will Shipley (So.)	7	Kobe Pace (Jr.)

DEFENSE (8)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	**3**	**Xavier Thomas (Sr.)**	5	K.J. Henry (Sr.)
DT	**11**	**Bryan Bresee (So.)**	8	Tré Williams (So.)
DT	**13**	**Tyler Davis (Sr.)**	**33**	**Ruke Orhorhoro (Jr.)**
DE	**98**	**Myles Murphy (Jr.)**	7	Justin Mascoll (Sr.)
SLB	0	Barrett Carter (So.)	21	Malcolm Greene (Jr.)
MLB	42	LaVonta Bentley (Jr.)	30	Keith Maguire (Jr.)
WLB	**22**	**Trenton Simpson (Jr.)**	54	Jeremiah Trotter Jr. (So.)
CB	6	Sheridan Jones (Sr.)	23	Toriano Pride Jr. (Fr.)
CB	20	Nate Wiggins (So.)	2	Fred Davis II (Jr.)
SS	**1**	**Andrew Mukuba (So.)**	9	R.J. Mickens (Jr.)
FS	25	Jalyn Phillips (Sr.)	**36**	**Lannden Zanders (Jr.)**

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	29	B.T. Potter (Sr.)	**KR**	1	Will Shipley (So.)
P	29	B.T. Potter (Sr.)	**PR**	80	Beaux Collins (So.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
DJ Uiagalelei	**374**	**208**	**2,246**	**9**	**10**
Taisun Phommachanh	19	11	131	1	1
Hunter Helms	**13**	**5**	**58**	**0**	**0**
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Will Shipley	**149**	**738**	**5.0**	**11**	
Kobe Pace	**104**	**641**	**6.2**	**6**	
DJ Uiagalelei	**105**	**308**	**2.9**	**4**	
Phil Mafah	**68**	**292**	**4.3**	**3**	
Taisun Phommachanh	11	69	6.3	1	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Justyn Ross	46	514	11.2	3	
Joseph Ngata	**23**	**438**	**19.0**	**1**	
Beaux Collins	**31**	**407**	**13.1**	**3**	
Dacari Collins	**16**	**221**	**13.8**	**0**	
Davis Allen	**28**	**208**	**7.4**	**3**	

KICKING: **B.T. Potter, 21-26 FGs, 101 pts.**
TACKLES: James Skalski, 100; Baylon Spector, 85
SACKS: **Myles Murphy, 7.0**
INTERCEPTIONS: Andrew Booth Jr., 3

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE TIGERS

Opposing Coaches Size Up Clemson

"I think losing Brent [Venables] is going to be really interesting. He was such a force there; it's more than losing a coordinator. He drove the whole thing on defense. The good thing for them is they have really good players on defense right now, and I think Wes [Goodwin] did a good job in the bowl game running the same scheme. He's really smart, but there are huge shoes to fill. ... The three defensive linemen are back, the linebacker, and the freshman safety is tremendous. There's a core there where they can keep it going and it'll look about the same this year. … I don't think the QB is a great player. They thought he was when Trevor [Lawrence] was out against Notre Dame, and maybe that fooled them? It's not out of the question that they change guys. They're also not as good around him. They haven't evaluated as well at OL like other positions. … The receivers have fallen off; when they were really rolling and winning nattys, that position flat-out scared you. Now they're league average, same as at running back. … They're not recruiting like they have. There's also a giant difference between NIL in the ACC and the Big Ten and SEC. Are they beating Alabama and those guys from here on out? They're still the best program in this league, but they've never had as many questions moving forward. This is the start of the next era for them, and it's possible they're not a national title winner anymore."

FLORIDA STATE SEMINOLES

National Forecast: 36 • ACC Atlantic Prediction: 4 • Projected Record: 7-5, 5-3 ACC

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Mike Norvell
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 8-13 (2 years)
CAREER RECORD: 46-28 (6 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Alex Atkins
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Adam Fuller
LOCATION: Tallahassee, FL
STADIUM: Doak Campbell Stadium (79,560)

KEY SEMINOLES

JORDAN TRAVIS, QB Travis has already set Florida State QB records for career rushing yards and rushing touchdowns; he accounted for 22 touchdowns last season (15 passing, seven rushing).

JAMMIE ROBINSON, S The South Carolina transfer earned first-team All-ACC honors last fall after leading the team in tackles (85) and interceptions (four).

FABIEN LOVETT, DT Disruptive force in the middle who flirted with leaving early for the NFL; Lovett is extremely athletic for his size (6'4", 306).

KEY LOSSES

JERMAINE JOHNSON II, DE Johnson's only season at Florida State after transferring in from Georgia was memorable: He racked up 70 tackles and team highs in sacks (12) and tackles for a loss (18).

KEIR THOMAS, DE The South Carolina transfer was also extremely productive and disruptive in his lone season with the Seminoles, finishing with 42 stops, 12 tackles for a loss and 6.5 sacks.

JASHAUN CORBIN, RB Corbin was the Seminoles' leading rusher with 887 yards (6.2 per carry), seven touchdowns and a team-high 25 receptions.

RISING STAR

FSU might have hit the transfer lottery when it landed defensive end **JARED VERSE** from FCS program UAlbany. The 6'4", 251-pounder is extremely athletic and was often dominant during spring drills. He won't make fans forget about Jermaine Johnson II immediately, but he undoubtedly will be the Seminoles' top pass rusher.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Sam McCall, S, Lakeland, FL	★★★★
2	Azareye'h Thomas, ATH, Niceville, FL	★★★★
3	Julian Armella, OL, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	★★★★
4	AJ Duffy, QB, Bradenton, FL	★★★★
5	Jaylen Early, OL, Duncanville, TX	★★★★
6	Qae'shon Sapp, OT, Leesburg, GA	★★★★
7	Rodney Hill, ATH, Statesboro, GA	★★★
8	Daniel Lyons, DL, Homestead, FL	★★★
9	Aaron Hester, Edge, Neptune Beach, FL	★★★
10	Bishop Thomas, DL, Orlando, FL	★★★
11	Antavious Woody, OL, Lafayette, AL	★★★
12	Daughtry Richardson, OT, Miami, FL	★★★
13	Omar Graham Jr., LB, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	★★★
14	Brian Courtney, ATH, Ashburn, VA	★★★
15	Kanaya Charlton, OL, Brunswick, GA	★★★
16	Jerrale Powers, TE, Duncanville, TX	★★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite

Even though he has won only eight of his first 21 games, and even though his predecessor got fired after less than two seasons, Mike Norvell is not entering the 2022 season on the hot seat.

Partly because of the mess he inherited and partly because of the goodwill he has fostered with a tireless work ethic and endless positivity, Norvell actually enters his third season at Florida State with access to greater resources than perhaps any coach in school history.

The university's administration opened the checkbook wide this offseason, bringing in several new support staff members — analysts to help with game-planning and assistants to help with recruiting — in an effort to catch up to other national powers.

Now, it's up to Norvell to start winning at a clip that will prevent his seat from getting warm heading into 2023.

Working in his favor is a defense that made major strides last fall. If the offense, which picked up some valuable pieces through the transfer portal, can show similar growth, the Seminoles should be eyeing their first bowl trip since 2019.

OFFENSE One year after bringing in a high-profile transfer to compete with Jordan Travis for the starting quarterback job, FSU is now putting all of its chips on the dual-threat signal-caller. FSU posted a 5–2 record in Travis' last seven starts, and he should have a better supporting cast around him.

The Seminoles bolstered their wide receiver room with four Power 5 transfers, and they also beefed up their offensive line and backfield. Former Oregon wideout Mycah Pittman emerged as the team's best receiver in the spring, Wisconsin transfer Kayden Lyles should bolster the middle of the OL and the running back room features a deep group led by redshirt sophomore Treshaun Ward (515 yards, four TDs, 6.4 ypc).

FSU's offense wasn't horrible last year, but it had too many drives disrupted by negative plays. The Seminoles gave up 351 yards on tackles for a loss — only 11 teams allowed more in the regular season — and that was a major reason why FSU ranked 105th nationally in third-down conversions (34.9 percent). Once the offense got behind the chains, its drives were typically sunk.

On the flip side, the Seminoles were outstanding in the red zone. Not only did they score on more than 90 percent of their trips inside the 20, but they also cashed in with touchdowns on 73.8 percent (No. 6 nationally).

FSU's hope is that added experience and talent on the offensive line will reduce the drive-killing negative plays, and some additional playmakers at the skill positions will help overcome them when they do occur.

DEFENSE If there was one tangible area of improvement from Year 1 to Year 2 under Norvell, it was the play of coordinator Adam Fuller's defense. A unit that was one of the worst in the country in 2020 — and again through the first four games of 2021 — improved substantially during the final two months.

JORDAN TRAVIS

Klayton Campbell/Florida State Football

2022 SCHEDULE

Aug. 27	Duquesne
Sept. 4	vs. LSU #
Sept. 16	at Louisville
Sept. 24	Boston College
Oct. 1	Wake Forest
Oct. 8	at NC State
Oct. 15	Clemson
Oct. 29	Georgia Tech
Nov. 5	at Miami (Fla.)
Nov. 12	at Syracuse
Nov. 19	Louisiana
Nov. 25	Florida

#New Orleans

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 5-7, 4-4 ACC

Sept. 5	Notre Dame (ot)	L	38-41
Sept. 11	Jacksonville State	L	17-20
Sept. 18	at Wake Forest	L	14-35
Sept. 25	Louisville	L	23-31
Oct. 2	Syracuse	W	33-30
Oct. 9	at North Carolina	W	35-25
Oct. 23	UMass	W	59-3
Oct. 30	at Clemson	L	20-30
Nov. 6	NC State	L	14-28
Nov. 13	Miami (Fla.)	W	31-28
Nov. 20	at Boston College	W	26-23
Nov. 27	at Florida	L	21-24

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	ACC	NATIONAL
Scoring	27.6 ppg	8	74
Rushing	177.8 ypg	6	52
Passing	201.6 ypg	9	94
Total	379.4 ypg	9	80

DEFENSE	PER GAME	ACC	NATIONAL
Scoring	26.5 ppg	7	68
Rushing	144.6 ypg	6	55
Passing	233.2 ypg	7	74
Total	377.8 ypg	6	66

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	ACC	NATIONAL
+1	+0.08	7	62

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	25.6	125
Defense	31.8	112
Margin	-6.2	123
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	40.5%	90
Defense	39.3%	35
Margin	+1.2%	63
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	5.9	72
Defense	5.3	30
Margin	+0.6	52
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.6	27
Defense	4.1	61
Margin	+0.5	41
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	-0.1	70
Actual	-1	71
Margin	-0.9	79

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

1.92

On average, the Seminoles started drives at their own 25.6-yard line. Florida State averaged only 1.92 points per drive on drives starting at their own 25 or worse.

35.2%

Florida State's defense held opponents to a 35.2 percent rushing success rate, 23rd in the FBS. That success didn't carry over to third downs, though: The Seminoles allowed a 46.0 percent third-down conversion rate, 94th overall.

34.9%

Florida State's passing offense was successful on only 34.9 percent of attempts, 107th in the FBS.

A few important personnel changes keyed that success, with the biggest ones being freshmen Kevin Knowles and Omarion Cooper winning starting jobs in the secondary, and veteran Jammie Robinson moving from nickel to safety. That solidified the back end, and a very good defensive front — led by likely future NFL stalwart Jermaine Johnson II (70 tackles, 18 TFLs) — took care of the rest. The vast majority of that two-deep on defense is back this fall. But it's important to note that Johnson and fellow defensive end Keir Thomas combined for 18.5 of the team's 33 sacks last season. And both of them have moved on.

The Seminoles should replace some of that production with former UAlbany star Jared Verse, who was one of the top prospects in the transfer portal this offseason. After racking up 14.5 sacks in 15 games at the FCS level, Verse will line up next to a very stout pair of defensive tackles in Fabien Lovett and Robert Cooper.

FSU also picked up a huge addition at linebacker, as former UCF star Tatum Bethune (108 tackles in '21) rejoins former position coach Randy Shannon, who now is the Seminoles' co-defensive coordinator.

SPECIALISTS The kicking game should be solid with veterans Ryan Fitzgerald and Alex Mastromanno returning at placekicker and punter, respectively. Fitzgerald hit 10-of-13 field goals last season, with a long of 53. And while Mastromanno doesn't boast a huge average (42.7), his streak of 93 consecutive punts without a touchback is remarkable. He downed 18 punts inside the 20 last season.

FSU's biggest problem on special teams has been the lack of a quality return game. Not only have the Noles lacked explosive plays, but their punt returners have also struggled with muffs and letting too many balls land and roll for extra yardage. Pittman excelled in that role at Oregon, averaging 10 yards per return, and quickly claimed the top job this spring.

FINAL ANALYSIS After going 3–6 in 2020 and 5–7 last fall, Norvell needs to at least lead FSU back to bowl eligibility to show that he's making progress. A 7–5 or 8–4 season could be within reach and would do wonders for his tenure. While the schedule is challenging, with non-conference games against LSU and rival Florida, the Seminoles have several things working in their favor. FSU gets an off-week before a big early game at Louisville, and rivals Clemson and UF also have to come to Tallahassee.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)				
WR	4	Mycah Pittman (Jr.)	0	Ja'Khi Douglas (So.)
WR	**80**	**Ontaria Wilson (Sr.)**	6	Keyshawn Helton (Sr.)
WR	**11**	**Malik McClain (So.)**	14	Johnny Wilson (So.)
LT	**52**	**Robert Scott Jr. (So.)**	70	Lloyd Willis (So.)
LG	**75**	**Dillan Gibbons (Sr.)**	67	Thomas Shrader (So.)
C	**53**	**Maurice Smith (So.)**	54	Kayden Lyles (Sr.)
RG	**76**	**Darius Washington (So.)**	56	Zane Herring (So.)
RT	58	Bless Harris (Jr.)	76	Darius Washington (So.)
TE	**87**	**Camren McDonald (Sr.)**	19	Wyatt Rector (Jr.)
QB	**13**	**Jordan Travis (Jr.)**	18	Tate Rodemaker (So.)
RB	8	Treshaun Ward (So.)	9	Lawrance Toafili (So.)
DEFENSE (7)		Returning Starters in **BOLD**		
DE	5	Jared Verse (So.)	9	Derrick McLendon II (So.)
NG	**91**	**Robert Cooper (Sr.)**	48	Jarrett Jackson (Jr.)
DT	**0**	**Fabien Lovett (Jr.)**	99	Malcolm Ray (So.)
DE	6	Dennis Briggs Jr. (Jr.)	35	Leonard Warner II (Sr.)
LB	15	Tatum Bethune (Jr.)	**46**	**DJ Lundy (So.)**
LB	**4**	**Kalen DeLoach (Jr.)**	33	Amari Gainer (Jr.)
CB	13	Omarion Cooper (So.)	7	Jarrian Jones (Jr.)
CB	8	Renardo Green (Jr.)	20	Azareye'h Thomas (Fr.)
NB	**26**	**Kevin Knowles II (So.)**	21	Greedy Vance (So.)
SS	**10**	**Jammie Robinson (Jr.)**	1	Jarques McClellion (Sr.)
FS	**27**	**Akeem Dent (Jr.)**	38	Shyheim Brown (Fr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	88	Ryan Fitzgerald (So.)	**KR**	0	Ja'Khi Douglas (So.)
P	29	Alex Mastromanno (So.)	**PR**	4	Mycah Pittman (Jr.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Jordan Travis	**194**	**122**	**1,539**	**15**	**6**
McKenzie Milton	139	81	775	3	6
Chubba Purdy	5	5	98	2	0
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Jashaun Corbin	143	887	6.2	7	
Jordan Travis	**134**	**530**	**4.0**	**7**	
Treshaun Ward	**81**	**515**	**6.4**	**4**	
Lawrance Toafili	**32**	**163**	**5.1**	**1**	
D.J. Williams	**10**	**47**	**4.7**	**1**	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Jashaun Corbin	25	144	5.8	1	
Andrew Parchment	24	313	13.0	2	
Camren McDonald	**24**	**243**	**10.1**	**2**	
Ontaria Wilson	**23**	**382**	**16.6**	**5**	
Treshaun Ward	**21**	**185**	**8.8**	**1**	

KICKING: **Ryan Fitzgerald, 10-13 FGs, 67 pts.**
TACKLES: **Jammie Robinson, 85;** Jermaine Johnson II, 70
SACKS: Jermaine Johnson II, 12.0
INTERCEPTIONS: **Jammie Robinson, 4**

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE SEMINOLES

Opposing Coaches Size Up Florida State

"It's possible that Mike [Norvell] might have this thing turned around a little bit, but not to the level that fans are going to want right now. They've relied so much on transfers, especially on defense; you never really know what they've got out there, and I don't mean that as a compliment to their strategy. Some of those guys have hit, but you can't maintain that at Florida State. At some point you stop using band-aids. … [Jordan] Travis is athletic and makes a bunch of plays, but he also seems hurt all the time. Can he function more as a primary thrower and dial down the runs? You have to think the coaches want that too. I don't think he moved around that much by design. The O-line looks like it will be better than these last few years — that's one place where they've been using the portal pretty well — and they always have talent at running back, so if they can match that on defense, they're going to be better overall for the first time in a long time. The UCF linebacker [Tatum Bethune] is going to help them out. … They have almost all of those receivers back, but none of them really blow you away. They don't have a go-to guy in that unit. … Is 7–5 enough? It should be. They could put pieces together this year that create a huge '23 season, and they're not in a place where they can really show off their high school recruiting. And yeah, we've all heard the talk about Deion [Sanders], so is 7–5 really enough?"

LOUISVILLE CARDINALS

National Forecast: 44 • ACC Atlantic Prediction: 6 • Projected Record: 6-6, 3-5 ACC

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Scott Satterfield
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 18-19 (3 years)
CAREER RECORD: 69-43 (9 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Lance Taylor
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Bryan Brown
LOCATION: Louisville, KY
STADIUM: Cardinal Stadium (61,000)

KEY CARDINALS

MALIK CUNNINGHAM, QB A calm, determined playmaker, Cunningham sharpened his passing skills last season while running for 133 or more yards three times in leading the nation's quarterbacks in both rushing yards (1,031) and rushing touchdowns (20).

MARSHON FORD, TE After excelling as a high school linebacker but coming to Louisville without a scholarship, Ford has caught 94 passes for 15 touchdowns over the past three seasons as a dangerous underneath weapon.

YASIR ABDULLAH, LB Second-team All-ACC performer last season who led the Cardinals with 10 sacks, the most by any Louisville player since 2015.

KEY LOSSES

C.J. AVERY, LB Led the team in tackles for three consecutive seasons, including 97 in 2021. He rarely missed a snap.

TYLER HARRELL, WR Showed team-leading speed by averaging 29 yards per reception but jolted the coaching staff by deciding to transfer after spring practice.

COLE BENTLEY, C Tough, durable run blocker who led the offensive line the last three seasons and was a steadying force during the coaching changes.

RISING STAR

With exceptional first-step quickness and impressive change-of-direction ability, defensive end **ASHTON GILLOTTE** contributed 19 tackles as a true freshman, primarily as a reserve. Cardinals head coach Scott Satterfield expects Gillotte to anchor the defensive line and become a disruptive force as a run-stopper and pass rusher as he moves into the starting lineup.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Popeye Williams, Edge, Westfield, IN	★★★★
2	Devaughn Mortimer, WR, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	★★★★
3	Selah Brown, DL, Louisville, KY	★★★
4	Jeremiah Caldwell, S, Belleville, MI	★★★
5	Khalib Johnson, QB, Pinson, AL	★★★
6	Tawfiq Thomas, DL, Tampa, FL	★★★
7	Chance Morrow, WR, Charlotte, NC	★★★
8	Izaiah Reed, OT, Jackson, TN	★★★
9	Maurice Turner, WR, Douglas, GA	★★★
10	Nate Kurisky, TE, Washington, DC	★★★
11	D'Angelo Hutchinson, S, St. Petersburg, FL	★★★
12	Chris Bell, WR, Greenville, MS	★★★
13	Max Cabana, OT, Easthampton, MA	★★★
14	Antonio Watts, S, Columbus, GA	★★★
15	Makhete Gueye, OT, Venice, FL	★★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite

Don't be surprised if Louisville head coach Scott Satterfield starts the 2022 season on some of those ubiquitous Hot Seat lists.

After earning the ACC Coach of the Year award in 2019, Satterfield has suffered consecutive losing seasons. The Cards have lost three straight rivalry games to Kentucky by a combined 109 points. Recruiting sagged with a class that ranked outside the top 50. Staff turnover has been persistent. The Cards failed to sell out any games last season.

Speculation raged after last season that Satterfield would not return for Year 4. Less than a week after athletic director Vince Tyra announced that Satterfield would be back in 2022, Tyra resigned. So the head coach is working for a skeptical fan base without the protection of the AD and president who hired him.

Satterfield has promised to upgrade his offense with a solid collection of returning players. He has promised that Louisville will focus on throwing fewer shorter passes. He modernized the school's recruiting unit and went to work in the transfer portal. But the coach realizes he needs to deliver a winning season.

OFFENSE When Malik Cunningham started at Louisville, his friend Lamar Jackson was finishing his final season as the Cards' quarterback. Cunningham returns for his fourth season as the team's starter following a season in which he fixed his turnover issues by throwing 19 touchdown passes with only six interceptions while displaying electrifying running ability. But as much as Satterfield likes that rushing dimension, he told Cunningham in spring ball to stay in the pocket and let more passing plays develop. The Cards cannot afford a serious injury to Cunningham, who played hurt part of last season.

Jalen Mitchell emerged as the Cards' top running back, rolling for 722 yards, with only a single 100-yard game. Tiyon Evans transferred from Tennessee, where he averaged 6.5 yards per carry while gaining 525 yards.

Marshon Ford gives the Cards a solid hybrid weapon as a tight end/H-back. A former walk-on, Ford led Louisville in receiving with 49 catches for 550 yards.

Satterfield must rework the receiving group after the Cardinals' top two wideouts departed via the transfer portal and receivers coach Gunter Brewer left for Maryland.

Louisville replaced its transfers with a pair of transfers. Tyler Hudson, the ASUN player of the year at Central Arkansas, had 27 touchdown catches in three seasons there. The other addition was Dee Wiggins, who made 62 catches over four seasons at Miami (Fla.).

Nic Cardwell will be the Cards' third offensive line coach in three seasons after Jack Bicknell Jr. left for North Carolina in the middle of spring practice. Four starters return, led by the powerful right side tandem of guard Adonis Boone and tackle Renato Brown. The group was solid in 2021, as the Cards led the ACC in 5.45 yards per rushing attempt.

MALIK CUNNINGHAM

Tom DiPace

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	at Syracuse
Sept. 9	at UCF
Sept. 16	Florida State
Sept. 24	USF
Oct. 1	at Boston College
Oct. 8	at Virginia
Oct. 22	Pittsburgh
Oct. 29	Wake Forest
Nov. 5	James Madison
Nov. 12	at Clemson
Nov. 19	NC State
Nov. 26	at Kentucky

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 6-7, 4-4 ACC

Sept. 6	vs. Ole Miss #	L	24-43
Sept. 11	Eastern Kentucky	W	30-3
Sept. 17	UCF	W	42-35
Sept. 25	at Florida State	W	31-23
Oct. 2	at Wake Forest	L	34-37
Oct. 9	Virginia	L	33-34
Oct. 23	Boston College	W	28-14
Oct. 30	at NC State	L	13-28
Nov. 6	Clemson	L	24-30
Nov. 13	Syracuse	W	41-3
Nov. 18	at Duke	W	62-22
Nov. 27	Kentucky	L	21-52
Dec. 28	vs. Air Force %	L	28-31

#Atlanta %First Responder Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	ACC	NATIONAL
Scoring	31.6 ppg	7	41
Rushing	209.8 ypg	3	22
Passing	236.4 ypg	8	65
Total	446.2 ypg	6	21

DEFENSE	PER GAME	ACC	NATIONAL
Scoring	27.3 ppg	8	77
Rushing	157.7 ypg	7	76
Passing	245.6 ypg	10	95
Total	403.3 ypg	9	84

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	ACC	NATIONAL
+2	+0.15	4	53

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	28.5	78
Defense	28.7	60
Margin	-0.2	65
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	43.7%	59
Defense	42.7%	70
Margin	+1.0%	65
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	6.8	10
Defense	5.9	85
Margin	+0.9	36
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.6	29
Defense	4.6	112
Margin	0.0	82
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	-1.8	96
Actual	+2	52
Margin	+3.8	29

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

5.07

The Cardinals ranked 14th in 2021 in scoring 5.07 points per quality possession. The Cardinals generated quality possessions on 51.1 percent of drives, 47th most in the FBS.

0.139

The Cardinals ranked 17th in explosiveness, averaging 0.139 EPA/play. Louisville's offense averaged 0.107 EPA/play on early downs, ranking 21st in the FBS in that category.

42.5%

Louisville allowed a 42.5 percent rushing success rate, ranking 97th among FBS defenses. Opponents averaged 5.22 yards per rush against the Cardinals.

DEFENSE Bryan Brown returns for his fourth season as the team's defensive coordinator, focused on improving a unit that allowed more than 2,000 yards rushing and 3,100 yards passing.

YaYa Diaby overcomes his lack of bulk with excellent first-step quickness and a relentless motor to deliver on one edge. Ashton Gillotte, the Cards' other defensive end, showed exceptional athleticism and push, although he was slowed by injuries at times.

Linebacker remains the strength of his unit. Yasir Abdullah is a three-year starter who was named second-team All-ACC because of his speed and ability to get to the quarterback. Monty Montgomery had 17 tackles in the first three games last season before he exited with a torn ACL. At 6'1", 190 pounds, Marvin Dallas has to rely on his speed to succeed. A former four-star recruit, MoMo Sanogo transferred from Ole Miss, where he was a part-time starter.

Veterans abound in the secondary, but Satterfield and Brown added six players from the portal to strengthen this group. Kei'Trel Clark is the Cards' top cover corner and has posted four interceptions and 76 tackles in two seasons since he transferred from Liberty. Senior Chandler Jones is a solid tackler who broke up seven passes last season. Kenderick Duncan fit seamlessly at safety, contributing 76 tackles after transferring from Georgia Southern. Jalen Alexander transferred from Duke, where he finished sixth in tackles. Safety M.J. Griffin (Temple), cornerback Jarvis Brownlee Jr. (Florida State) and cornerback Jayden Williams (USC) will push for playing time.

SPECIALISTS Kicker James Turner's accuracy slipped from 87 percent to 64 percent as he missed eight of 22 field goal attempts. Mark Vassett should hold the punting job after averaging nearly 42 yards per kick. Hudson returned punts at Central Arkansas, while Jawhar Jordan burned Air Force with a 100-yard kickoff return in the First Responder Bowl.

FINAL ANALYSIS The Cards open by playing their first two and four of their first six games on the road. They'll need a fast start because the schedule is back-loaded with this closing stretch: at Clemson (where U of L has never won), NC State and at Kentucky (which has dominated Satterfield). There's enough veteran talent on the first team for the Cards to get to six wins, but Cunningham must remain healthy and excel for Louisville to achieve more than that.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)				
WR	0	Tyler Hudson (Jr.)	86	Elijah Downing (Fr.)
WR	10	Dee Wiggins (Jr.)	9	Ahmari Huggins-Bruce (So.)
WR	4	Braden Smith (Jr.)	11	Josh Johnson (Sr.)
LT	**70**	**Trevor Reid (Sr.)**	68	Michael Gonzalez (So.)
LG	**55**	**Caleb Chandler (Sr.)**	67	Luke Kandra (So.)
C	61	Bryan Hudson (Jr.)	51	Austin Collins (So.)
RG	**74**	**Adonis Boone (Sr.)**	71	Joshua Black (So.)
RT	**56**	**Renato Brown (So.)**	75	Aaron Gunn (Fr.)
TE	**5**	**Marshon Ford (Jr.)**	84	Dez Melton (So.)
QB	**3**	**Malik Cunningham (Sr.)**	6	Evan Conley (Jr.)
RB	**15**	**Jalen Mitchell (So.)**	7	Tiyon Evans (Jr.)
DEFENSE (7)		Returning Starters in **BOLD**		
DE	**6**	**YaYa Diaby (Sr.)**	41	Ramon Puryear (So.)
DT	99	Dezmond Tell (So.)	92	Henry Bryant (So.)
DE	9	Ashton Gillotte (So.)	31	Zach Edwards (So.)
OLB	14	Marvin Dallas (Sr.)	10	Benjamin Perry (So.)
MLB	1	MoMo Sanogo (Sr.)	**44**	**Dorian Jones (So.)**
MLB	**7**	**Monty Montgomery (Sr.)**	23	K.J. Cloyd (Jr.)
OLB	**22**	**Yasir Abdullah (Sr.)**	15	Kameron Wilson (So.)
CB	**2**	**Chandler Jones (Sr.)**	37	Jaylen Williams (So.)
CB	**13**	**Kei'Trel Clark (Jr.)**	28	Trey Franklin (Jr.)
SS		Jalen Alexander (Sr.)	26	M.J. Griffin (So.)
FS	**27**	**Kenderick Duncan (Sr.)**	5	Josh Minkins (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	32	James Turner (Jr.)	**KR**	25	Jawhar Jordan (So.)
P	49	Mark Vassett (So.)	**PR**	0	Tyler Hudson (Jr.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	**ATT**	**COMP**	**YDS**	**TD**	**INT**
Malik Cunningham	**337**	**209**	**2,941**	**19**	**6**
Evan Conley	**19**	**10**	**79**	**1**	**0**
Braden Smith	**3**	**2**	**54**	**1**	**0**
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Malik Cunningham	**173**	**1,031**	**6.0**	**20**	
Jalen Mitchell	**155**	**722**	**4.7**	**5**	
Trevion Cooley	**86**	**431**	**5.0**	**1**	
Hassan Hall	38	272	7.2	1	
Maurice Burkley	22	102	4.6	1	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Marshon Ford	**49**	**550**	**11.2**	**2**	
Jordan Watkins	35	529	15.1	4	
Ahmari Huggins-Bruce	**29**	**444**	**15.3**	**4**	
Tyler Harrell	18	523	29.1	6	
Justin Marshall	23	322	14.0	1	

KICKING: **James Turner, 14-22 FGs, 88 pts.**
TACKLES: C.J. Avery, 97; Qwynnterrio Cole, 87
SACKS: **Yasir Abdullah, 10.0**
INTERCEPTIONS: **Kei'Trel Clark, 3**

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE CARDINALS

Opposing Coaches Size Up Louisville

"It's win-now time. Other than Georgia Tech, this is the job that people think is going to come open in the league. You watch the coaching and player turnover stack up, and it seems like they've drifted from what made [Scott Satterfield] successful at Appalachian State. … Offensively, he's still going to be calling plays, so I'm skeptical how different things are going to look with Lance [Taylor] as OC. They don't seem settled on what they want to do with Malik [Cunningham]. It's hard to figure out their identity, but it's also hard to see what they want it to be. … Defensively, they're very average at best. They don't pressure much; they don't have anyone up front who bothers you. … Probably the thing that jumps out most is how much they've worked the portal in both directions and how different that is from what Scott came from at App. Even as a G5, they had a system of developing guys, building a very specific culture, and the last few years it seems like they're always scrambling to rebuild that roster and define themselves. … I think the school and the head coach figured out they're not a great fit for each other a while ago, and there hasn't been a way to create a break yet. He's tried to get out and it didn't work, and there have been issues at the school that have probably bought him some time up until now. Unless they surprise a lot of people, this feels like the end."

NC STATE WOLFPACK

National Forecast: 12 • ACC Atlantic Prediction: 2 • Projected Record: 10-2, 6-2 ACC

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Dave Doeren
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 64-49 (9 years)
CAREER RECORD: 87-53 (11 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tim Beck
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tony Gibson
LOCATION: Raleigh, NC
STADIUM: Carter-Finley Stadium (58,000)

KEY WOLFPACK

DEVIN LEARY, QB He solidified himself as the face of the program and a star in the ACC with a breakout season in which he threw for 3,433 yards and 35 touchdowns, with just five interceptions.

DRAKE THOMAS, LB The versatile Thomas started off at strongside linebacker and then filled in for the injured Isaiah Moore in the middle. He had 99 tackles, six sacks and three interceptions.

PAYTON WILSON, LB Wilson underwent another shoulder surgery two games into last year. He also suffered knee injuries in 2017 and 2018. He had 108 tackles and 11.5 tackles for a loss in 2020.

KEY LOSSES

IKEM EKWONU, LT The All-American anchored the offensive line at left tackle before making the move to the NFL with two years of eligibility remaining.

EMEKA EMEZIE, WR Took advantage of his super senior year and had 60 catches for 802 yards and six touchdowns, including two scores against rival North Carolina.

ZONOVAN KNIGHT, RB He led the team in rushing with 140 carries for 753 yards and three touchdowns — marking his third straight season with 700-plus rushing yards — and he also was a threat on returns, taking back two kickoffs for scores.

RISING STAR

Sophomore **DEMIE SUMO-KARNGBAYE** played six games on special teams, but the three-star recruit will be part of a committee at running back, with Zonovan Knight and Ricky Person Jr. having turned pro. Sumo-Karngbaye's size (6'0", 210) gives him an extra dimension as more of a power back for the NC State offense.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Michael Allen, RB, Greenville, NC	★★★★
2	Torren Wright, LB, Kannapolis, NC	★★★★
3	Brandon Cleveland, DL, Tampa, FL	★★★
4	MJ Morris, QB, Carrollton, GA	★★★
5	Jacarrius Peak, OL, Valdosta, GA	★★★
6	Daejuan Thompson, LB, Whiteville, NC	★★★
7	Nick Campbell, DL, Lake Minneola, FL	★★★
8	Isaiah Crowell, CB, Kernersville, NC	★★★
9	Jackson Vick, CB, Bailey, NC	★★★
10	Terrell Timmons Jr., WR, Greensboro, NC	★★★
11	DJ Jackson, DL, Sumter, SC	★★★
12	Rylan Vann, OL, Cary, NC	★★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite

Expectations are sky-high for NC State due in part to numerous seniors taking advantage of the extra COVID year and a more than favorable schedule on the horizon.

The non-conference slate features a date at East Carolina and home games vs. Charleston Southern, Texas Tech and UConn, all favorable matchups. The ACC slate includes trips to Clemson and North Carolina, but the Wolfpack get nemesis Wake Forest at home.

NC State went 9–3 overall and 6–2 in the ACC last year and was thirsty for a 10-win season, but those hopes got dashed by UCLA's COVID outbreak hours before the Holiday Bowl. The goal remains the same, and NC State head coach Dave Doeren knows that many eyes will be on the Wolfpack this season.

"They'll be motivated," Doeren says. "Our guys have a chip on their shoulder. We didn't get to the ACC Championship [Game]. We have a lot to prove still."

OFFENSE The offense has some holes to fill, but with the return of Devin Leary at quarterback, things should fall into place.

Leary was a big question mark going into the season due to suffering a broken leg in 2020. With a full, somewhat normal offseason with offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach Tim Beck, he cut down on his turnovers and risk-taking and became a proven producer. Leary turned it loose to go 283-of-431 passing for 3,433 yards, with 35 touchdowns and only five interceptions last year. He went six straight games without an interception and threw for over 300 yards in six contests. The pocket passer gets somewhat ignored in favor of other dual-threat quarterbacking peers when it comes to all-league voting, but he threw for at least four touchdowns in five games, and he isn't exactly immobile.

Protecting Leary's blind side proved to be the offseason focus. Redshirt sophomore left tackle Ikem Ekwonu turned pro, leaving one spot open on the offensive line. Redshirt sophomore Anthony Belton, who is 6'6" and 330 pounds, got the start at left tackle in the spring game. Senior Bryson Speas and sophomore Timothy McKay could be in the mix at left tackle but could also start along the line at other positions.

Wide receivers Devin Carter and Thayer Thomas both return, and a third wideout will need to join them. Thomas caught 51 passes for 596 yards and eight touchdowns last year, and the 6'3", 215-pound Carter snagged 31 receptions for 556 yards and six scores.

The other big question will be who emerges as the go-to running back. The 5'10", 192-pound Jordan Houston rushed 101 times for 526 yards and two scores in 2019 and is an adept receiving target. Sophomore Demie Sumo-Karngbaye earned consistent praise from the coaches and his teammates throughout the spring.

DEFENSE NC State went through a rash of injuries, with six positions affected, but the Pack allowed just 19.7 points per game to finish second in the ACC and No. 14 nationally. NC State was second in the ACC with 15 in-

DEVIN LEARY

Gregg Forwerck/NC State Athletics

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	at East Carolina
Sept. 10	Charleston Southern
Sept. 17	Texas Tech
Sept. 24	Connecticut
Oct. 1	at Clemson
Oct. 8	Florida State
Oct. 15	at Syracuse
Oct. 27	Virginia Tech
Nov. 5	Wake Forest
Nov. 12	Boston College
Nov. 19	at Louisville
Nov. 25	at North Carolina

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 9-3, 6-2 ACC

Sept. 2	USF	W	45-0
Sept. 11	at Mississippi State	L	10-24
Sept. 18	Furman	W	45-7
Sept. 25	Clemson (ot)	W	27-21
Oct. 2	Louisiana Tech	W	34-27
Oct. 16	at Boston College	W	33-7
Oct. 23	at Miami (Fla.)	L	30-31
Oct. 30	Louisville	W	28-13
Nov. 6	at Florida State	W	28-14
Nov. 13	at Wake Forest	L	42-45
Nov. 20	Syracuse	W	41-17
Nov. 26	North Carolina	W	34-30

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	ACC	NATIONAL
Scoring	33.1 ppg	6	28
Rushing	126.0 ypg	13	99
Passing	288.4 ypg	5	19
Total	414.4 ypg	8	59
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**ACC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	19.7 ppg	2	14
Rushing	124.0 ypg	3	22
Passing	207.6 ypg	3	31
Total	331.6 ypg	3	21
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**ACC**	**NATIONAL**
+6	+0.50	3	29

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	30.7	29
Defense	25.5	5
Margin	+5.2	8
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	40.7%	83
Defense	34.1%	3
Margin	+6.6%	30
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	6.2	50
Defense	5.0	17
Margin	+1.2	19
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.5	33
Defense	3.8	43
Margin	+0.7	32
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	+1.8	47
Actual	+5	32
Margin	+3.2	40

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

32.9%

NC State ranked second in the nation in passing success rate on defense, holding opponents to a 32.3 percent success rate.

29.3%

Not surprisingly, given its success rate against the pass, NC State was also highly effective on third downs. The Wolfpack finished fifth nationally in third-down defense, allowing only a 29.3 percent conversion rate (53 of 181) to their opponents.

-0.028

On offense, the Wolfpack averaged -0.028 EPA/rush, the 96th-rated rushing explosiveness figure in the nation.

terceptions and finished in the top 31 nationally in the FBS in every major defensive category.

Defensive coordinator Tony Gibson and his 3-3-5 scheme lost linebackers Payton Wilson and Isaiah Moore, nose tackle C.J. Clark, defensive end Savion Jackson, nickel Tyler Baker-Williams and safeties Cyrus Fagan and Devan Boykin at different points in the season. Five players who started the season opener against USF were out when the Wolfpack played North Carolina at season's end.

The good news is that Wilson and Moore returned to NC State rather than pursue their NFL dreams, in part because of their injuries. Wilson had shoulder surgery, and Moore suffered an ACL tear.

The extra COVID year has led Fagan, nose tackle Cory Durden, cornerback Derrek Pitts Jr., safety Tanner Ingle and Baker-Williams to return for another year of college football.

The absence of Moore and Wilson shifted junior Drake Thomas to middle linebacker, where he had 99 tackles, 13.5 tackles for a loss, six sacks, three interceptions and nine quarterback hurries.

Even in a solid overall year, NC State's defense struggled in losses to Wake Forest and Miami (Fla.) and in the comeback win over North Carolina, revealing some deficiencies. The Demon Deacons went 10-of-19 on third downs and converted a fourth-down play in the 45–42 home win. Miami quarterback Tyler Van Dyke threw for 325 yards and four touchdowns to lead the Hurricanes to a 31–30 upset victory. The Wolfpack allowed 297 rushing yards (7.2 yards per carry) against the Tar Heels.

SPECIALISTS NC State returns veteran kicker Christopher Dunn and brought in Towson graduate transfer punter Shane McDonough. Dunn has made 80.2 percent of his field goals (69-of-86) and all 170 career extra points, with a long of 53. McDonough averaged 41.3 yards per punt with eight punts over 50 yards and 15 inside the 20-yard line. Thomas averaged 9.5 yards on 17 punt returns last year and had a touchdown in 2019. State will need to replace Zonovan Knight on kick returns.

FINAL ANALYSIS NC State has greatly benefited from the extra COVID year, and it should result in one of its best-ever regular seasons. If the backs and O-line can grind out yards on third and short and inside the 5-yard line, the offense should put up a ton of points. That could bring the rare double-digit victory season, which has happened only once before in school history.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

WR	**5**	**Thayer Thomas (Sr.)**	83	Josh Crabtree (Fr.)
WR	**88**	**Devin Carter (Jr.)**	85	Anthony Smith (So.)
WR	4	Porter Rooks (So.)	15	Keyon Lesane (Jr.)
LT	74	Anthony Belton (So.)	62	Jaleel Davis (Fr.)
LG	**56**	**Bryson Speas (Sr.)**	**54**	**Dylan McMahon (So.)**
C	**50**	**Grant Gibson (Sr.)**	57	Lyndon Cooper (Fr.)
RG	**53**	**Derrick Eason (Jr.)**	75	Anthony Carter Jr. (Fr.)
RT	52	Timothy McKay (So.)	76	Patrick Matan (Fr.)
TE	6	Trent Pennix (Jr.)	29	Christopher Toudle (So.)
QB	**13**	**Devin Leary (Jr.)**	10	Ben Finley (Fr.)
RB	3	Jordan Houston (Jr.)	26	Demie Sumo-Karngbaye (So.)

DEFENSE (10)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	45	Davin Vann (So.)	58	Travali Price (Fr.)
NT	**48**	**Cory Durden (Sr.)**	55	Joshua Harris (So.)
DE	**90**	**Savion Jackson (Jr.)**	5	C.J. Clark (So.)
SLB	**32**	**Drake Thomas (Jr.)**	27	Jayland Parker (Fr.)
MLB	**1**	**Isaiah Moore (Sr.)**	26	Devon Betty (So.)
WLB	**11**	**Payton Wilson (Jr.)**	2	Jaylon Scott (Jr.)
CB	**25**	**Shyheim Battle (So.)**	3	Aydan White (So.)
CB	**24**	**Derrek Pitts Jr. (Sr.)**	22	Teshaun Smith (Sr.)
NB	**13**	**Tyler Baker-Williams (Sr.)**	19	Joshua Pierre-Louis (So.)
SS	**10**	**Tanner Ingle (Sr.)**	**6**	**Jakeen Harris (Jr.)**
FS	4	Cyrus Fagan (Sr.)	12	Devan Boykin (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	32	Christopher Dunn (Sr.)	KR	20	Julian Gray (Fr.)
P	97	Shane McDonough (Sr.)	PR	5	Thayer Thomas (Sr.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Devin Leary	**431**	**283**	**3,433**	**35**	**5**
Ben Finley	**9**	**5**	**28**	**0**	**0**
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Zonovan Knight	140	753	5.4	3	
Ricky Person Jr.	135	636	4.7	5	
Jordan Houston	**20**	**83**	**4.2**	**1**	
Trent Pennix	**3**	**48**	**16.0**	**0**	
Delbert Mimms III	**6**	**47**	**7.8**	**0**	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Emeka Emezie	60	802	13.4	6	
Thayer Thomas	**51**	**596**	**11.7**	**8**	
Devin Carter	**31**	**556**	**17.9**	**6**	
Ricky Person Jr.	28	240	8.6	2	
Porter Rooks	**23**	**298**	**13.0**	**0**	

KICKING: **Christopher Dunn, 13-19 FGs, 87 pts.**
TACKLES: **Drake Thomas, 99; Tanner Ingle, 82**
SACKS: Levi Jones, 6.0, **Drake Thomas, 6.0**
INTERCEPTIONS: **Drake Thomas, 3**

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE WOLFPACK

Opposing Coaches Size Up NC State

"Last year might've been the proof of concept the staff has been trying to deliver since they got there. A lot of things clicked for them, and the Clemson win was bigger than the moment. They can take that out to the Carolinas and recruit with it. It's proof of concept for Dave [Doeren]. … The quarterback [Devin Leary] is legit. He was a different guy when he was playing injured, but you got a much better idea of his talent last year. The one outside receiver [Emeka Emezie] was really good. They need to find that production with the other guys they have, but I don't think they're that caliber. The tackle [Ikem Ekwonu] is going to the league as a first-rounder; they need to replace him, but otherwise the line is pretty good. If they can swap in some new running backs, I expect them to keep on pace. … Gibby [DC Tony Gibson] has really found himself at NC State. He runs a really effective system there, and I think his guys are totally bought in. They really played well, and they kept losing guys. I think if they're at full strength, it might be enough to swing a possession in that Wake game. … Overall, they're a more talented team and a deeper one than probably any other time in their history with Doeren. The issue now is expectations. This program seems cursed when everyone pays attention. They're going to have eyes on them immediately. Leary could take them to a division title if he's healthy."

SYRACUSE ORANGE

National Forecast: 57 • ACC Atlantic Prediction: 7 • Projected Record: 6-6, 3-5 ACC

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Dino Babers
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 29-43 (6 years)
CAREER RECORD: 66-59 (10 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Robert Anae
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tony White
LOCATION: Syracuse, NY
STADIUM: Carrier Dome (49,057)

KEY ORANGE

SEAN TUCKER, RB One of the best rushers in the nation, Tucker returns with an All-America target on his back, but he's also gotten faster after a winter sprinting on SU's track and field team.

MIKEL JONES, LB A first-team All-ACC selection, Jones opted to return for a fourth season rather than go pro and has his sights set on leading the best linebacker corps in the nation.

GARRETT WILLIAMS, CB Another veteran defender who flirted with leaving early, Williams has all of the tools to perform as one of the ACC's top cover men if he can avoid the nagging hamstring issues that slowed him in 2021.

KEY LOSSES

CODY ROSCOE, DE One of the ACC's top pass rushers and an AP Midseason All-American, Roscoe is off to prove that his lack of traditional size and athleticism won't hold him back from playing in the pros.

KINGSLEY JONATHAN, DE Another proven edge rusher, Jonathan is one of four super seniors who played significant roles for the Orange last fall.

AIRON SERVAIS, C An iron man who started 60 consecutive games for the Orange, Servais leaves a void in the middle of the offensive line that SU will have to fill if it wants to build a balanced offense in 2022.

RISING STAR

Redshirt freshman quarterback **JUSTIN LAMSON** created some separation behind Garrett Shrader this spring, capitalizing on first-team reps after the returning starter tweaked his hamstring. Lamson has work left to do if he wants to vie for the top spot, but SU has needed to call on its backup for meaningful snaps every year since 2012.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Francois Nolton, DL, Miami, FL	★★★
2	LeQuint Allen, RB, Millville, NJ	★★★
3	Dom Foster, ATH, Warren, OH	★★★
4	Kadin Bailey, LB, Jefferson, GA	★★★
5	Greg Delaine, CB, Ft. Myers, FL	★★★
6	Denis Jaquez, Edge, Richland, NJ	★★★
7	Chad Schuster, OT, Franklin, WI	★★★
8	Mekhi Mason, LB, Opa Locka, FL	★★★
9	Jeremiah Wilson, CB, Kissimmee, FL	★★★
10	Belizaire Bassette, DL, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	★★★
11	Cornell Perry, ATH, Flat Rock, MI	★★★
12	Quan Peterson, CB, Rock Hill, SC	★★★
13	Donovan Brown, WR, Gaithersburg, MD	★★★
14	Kevin Jobity Jr., DL, Buffalo, NY	★★★
15	Joe Cruz, OT, Ronkonkoma, NY	★★★
16	Max von Marburg, P, Melbourne, Aus	n/r
17	Brady Denaburg, K, Merritt Island, FL	n/r

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite

Syracuse has rejuvenated energy heading into what could be a bowl-or-bust Year 7 under Dino Babers. The head coach overhauled his staff, a shakeup highlighted by the additions of offensive coordinator Robert Anae and quarterbacks coach Jason Beck — two products of the Bronco Mendenhall tree who head to Central New York from Virginia.

That offensive brain trust will look to develop a passing game to complement the rushing success established around All-America running back Sean Tucker and dual-threat quarterback Garrett Shrader — a duo that combined for 2,277 rushing yards and 26 touchdowns on the ground last year.

On the other side of the ball, a back eight that returns each of its starters will need a young defensive line to grow up quickly after the team's top five contributors from last fall exited the program.

In their way: a daunting schedule that starts with a home game against Louisville and includes arguably the toughest four-game stretch in recent program history.

OFFENSE Shrader returns as the projected starting quarterback, tasked with reviving what was one of the nation's worst air attacks. SU ranked 121st in the Football Bowl Subdivision last year, averaging 158.2 passing yards per game. And the unit's imbalance contributed to Syracuse scoring just 24.9 points per game, good for 91st nationally.

Having spent the 2020 season working as a wide receiver at Mississippi State, Shrader believes his accrual of consistent QB reps will lead to a more productive second season in orange. The bruising 6'4", 228-pound playmaker completed 52.6 percent of his passes for 1,445 yards, nine touchdowns and four interceptions in 2021. Before finishing the year with a pair of scoring strikes against Pittsburgh, though, Shrader went three full games without throwing a TD.

The path to moving the ball through the air, however, goes through the offensive line and receiving corps. A front five that has ranked near the bottom of the FBS in sacks and pressures allowed each of the last three years is still looking to solidify its center and right tackle positions with offers gradually trickling out to transfer targets over the course of the offseason.

And a receiving corps that doesn't have a single player with more than 600 yards of production in his time at SU is searching for individuals to separate from the pack. Babers rotated through all of his scholarship pass-catchers over the course of spring practice as Anae and new outside receivers coach Michael Johnson evaluated returners and newcomers such as Michigan State transfer CJ Hayes.

DEFENSE The front of defensive coordinator Tony White's 3-3-5 system saw four seniors graduate at the end of last season, while tackle Curtis Harper transferred to Akron. That leaves just three scholarship returnees who've played meaningful action, none of whom saw

SEAN TUCKER

Syracuse Athletics

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Louisville
Sept. 10	at UConn
Sept. 17	Purdue
Sept. 23	Virginia
Oct. 1	Wagner
Oct. 15	NC State
Oct. 22	at Clemson
Oct. 29	Notre Dame
Nov. 5	at Pittsburgh
Nov. 12	Florida State
Nov. 19	at Wake Forest
Nov. 26	at Boston College

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 5-7, 2-6 ACC

Sept. 4	at Ohio	W	29-9
Sept. 11	Rutgers	L	7-17
Sept. 18	UAlbany	W	62-24
Sept. 24	Liberty	W	24-21
Oct. 2	at Florida State	L	30-33
Oct. 9	Wake Forest (ot)	L	37-40
Oct. 15	Clemson	L	14-17
Oct. 23	at Virginia Tech	W	41-36
Oct. 30	Boston College	W	21-6
Nov. 13	at Louisville	L	3-41
Nov. 20	at NC State	L	17-41
Nov. 27	Pittsburgh	L	14-31

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	ACC	NATIONAL
Scoring	24.9 ppg	10	91
Rushing	213.5 ypg	1	16
Passing	158.2 ypg	14	121
Total	371.7 ypg	10	86
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**ACC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	26.3 ppg	6	66
Rushing	126.1 ypg	4	26
Passing	204.2 ypg	2	26
Total	330.3 ypg	2	19
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**ACC**	**NATIONAL**
-7	-0.58	12	108

more than Caleb Okechukwu's 258 snaps in 2021, per Pro Football Focus.

Second-year defensive tackle Terry Lockett and rangy, explosive edge rusher Steve Linton also project to take on considerable roles, though that trio's size — totaling just 750 pounds combined — raises questions to go along with their limited experience.

SU returns one of the ACC's top linebacker trios in Mikel Jones, Marlowe Wax and Stefon Thompson, a similarly proven cornerback duo in Garrett Williams and Duce Chestnut and a bevy of proven safeties, boosted by the winter additions of Rutgers transfer Alijah Clark and Louisville transfer Bralyn Oliver.

How well the defensive line holds up, particularly in early-down run defense, will correlate directly to playmaking opportunities for the veterans behind them. As was the case with the offensive line, SU is actively recruiting defensive linemen out of the portal.

SPECIALISTS Babers' offseason maneuvering also included the hiring of Bob Ligashesky as special teams coordinator. After five years as the top unit in the program, SU's special teams plummeted without a lead coach last fall. Now the 36-year veteran, who has split his time between college and the pros, is working to revitalize the confidence of former Lou Groza Award-winning kicker Andre Szmyt while coaching up the team's two scholarship punters.

SU returns its top return men in Trebor Pena and Courtney Jackson, both of whom have found the end zone as specialists, as well as top long snapper Aaron Bolinsky.

FINAL ANALYSIS Syracuse has some of its best talent under Babers — a group headlined by Tucker, but one that also includes Jones, Williams and All-ACC left tackle Matthew Bergeron. The question is whether a new group of coaches can lift up the weak links on each side of the ball to give the team a chance to go bowling for the first time since 2018.

And that challenge is made steeper by the schedule. SU could be favored in only a couple of games, and a roster implosion is easy to imagine following the NC State-Clemson-Notre Dame-Pittsburgh run that starts in Week 7.

It all shapes up as a fascinating season for Syracuse, with Babers looking to meet the on-field expectations set by athletic director John Wildhack.

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	26.2	121
Defense	32.5	119
Margin	-6.3	124
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	42.0%	76
Defense	42.8%	71
Margin	-0.8%	79
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	5.8	75
Defense	5.2	26
Margin	+0.6	54
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.3	55
Defense	3.8	44
Margin	+0.5	52
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	-1.7	94
Actual	-5	94
Margin	-3.3	99

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

0.187

Syracuse ranked seventh in the nation in rushing explosiveness, averaging 0.187 EPA/play and 12.5 yards per successful rush. The Orange led the ACC in rushing at 213.5 yards per game.

1.53%

Despite a sacks allowed percentage of 10.9 percent (122nd in the nation), indicating a high level of pressure, Syracuse's interception percentage of 1.53 percent ranked 15th in the nation.

4.71

Syracuse's defense struggled to finish drives, allowing opponents to score 4.71 points per quality opportunity, 90th in the nation.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)

WR	**85**	**Courtney Jackson (So.)**	19	Oronde Gadsden II (So.)
WR	**14**	**Anthony Queeley (Jr.)**	17	Umari Hatcher (Fr.)
WR	82	Damien Alford (So.)	29	Trebor Pena (So.)
LT	**60**	**Matthew Bergeron (Jr.)**	71	Enrique Cruz Jr. (Fr.)
LG	**63**	**Christopher Bleich (Jr.)**	56	Darius Tisdale (Sr.)
C	55	Josh Ilaoa (So.)	73	Wes Hoeh (Fr.)
RG	**57**	**Dakota Davis (Sr.)**	74	Jakob Bradford (So.)
RT	**52**	**Carlos Vettorello (Jr.)**	51	Anthony Red (So.)
TE	5	Chris Elmore (Sr.)	81	Maximilian Mang (So.)
QB	**6**	**Garrett Shrader (Jr.)**	10	Justin Lamson (Fr.)
RB	**34**	**Sean Tucker (So.)**	28	Juwaun Price (So.)

DEFENSE (8)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	93	Caleb Okechukwu (Jr.)	54	Jatius Geer (Fr.)
DT	90	Terry Lockett (So.)	45	Kevon Darton (So.)
DE	17	Steve Linton (So.)	99	Elijah Fuentes-Cundiff (Fr.)
SLB	**7**	**Stefon Thompson (So.)**	16	Leon Lowery (Fr.)
MLB	**3**	**Mikel Jones (Jr.)**	12	Anwar Sparrow (Fr.)
WLB	**2**	**Marlowe Wax (So.)**	81	Derek McDonald (Fr.)
CB	**8**	**Garrett Williams (So.)**	24	Jeremiah Wilson (Fr.)
CB	**0**	**Duce Chestnut (So.)**	15	Neil Nunn (So.)
ROV	**23**	**Justin Barron (So.)**	19	Rob Hanna (So.)
BS	**11**	**Ja'Had Carter (So.)**	34	Eric Coley (Sr.)
FS	**14**	**Jason Simmons Jr. (Jr.)**	10	Alijah Clark (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	91	Andre Szmyt (Sr.)	**KR**	29	Trebor Pena (So.)
P	98	James Williams (So.)	**PR**	29	Trebor Pena (So.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Garrett Shrader	**234**	**123**	**1,445**	**9**	**4**
Tommy DeVito	52	32	388	1	2
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Sean Tucker	**246**	**1,496**	**6.1**	**12**	
Garrett Shrader	**173**	**781**	**4.5**	**14**	
Tommy DeVito	21	90	4.3	1	
Jarveon Howard	7	79	11.3	0	
Cooper Lutz	17	60	3.5	1	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Courtney Jackson	**37**	**389**	**10.5**	**3**	
Devaughn Cooper	**21**	**199**	**9.5**	**0**	
Sean Tucker	**20**	**255**	**12.8**	**2**	
Taj Harris	16	171	10.7	0	
Anthony Queeley	**15**	**222**	**14.8**	**2**	

KICKING: **Andre Szmyt, 9-14 FGs, 63 pts.**
TACKLES: **Mikel Jones, 110; Stefon Thompson, 79**
SACKS: Cody Roscoe, 8.5
INTERCEPTIONS: **Duce Chestnut, 3**

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE ORANGE

Opposing Coaches Size Up Syracuse

"So they've changed over the offensive staff again. Three years ago they're Texas Air Raid, throwing it 50 times a game, which is a radical thing to see up there, and they can't sustain it because of the talent gap and because the defenses adapted. Then it's the former Mississippi State QB, and they're running it and it's almost option-ish, and they were maybe a little bit better because of the defense helping out. Now those guys are out and he has the Virginia offensive staff. Now it's like a version of the West Coast offense. How is the personnel going to respond? You can't maintain this kind of scheme change without hitting bust. … Defensively, they're really well coached, give them credit too, because they're going out and finding guys that get overlooked and they develop them into some mean dudes. They're replacing some guys up front, but I think if [Tony] White was at another school, he would've been noticed right now. He's done a really good job running that 3-3. … If they could find a long-term solution on offense, I think Dino Babers would probably get more credit than he does, because they've come a long way from what he was known for schematically when he took the job. He was smart enough to move on when the personnel didn't match, and they've found some solid kids in a hard place to recruit to."

WAKE FOREST DEMON DEACONS

National Forecast: 16 • ACC Atlantic Prediction: 3 • Projected Record: 9-3, 5-3 ACC

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Dave Clawson
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 51-48 (8 years)
CAREER RECORD: 141-127 (22 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Warren Ruggiero
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Brad Lambert
LOCATION: Winston-Salem, NC
STADIUM: Truist Field (31,500)

KEY DEMON DEACONS

SAM HARTMAN, QB Still a redshirt junior despite playing in 36 games, Hartman threw for 39 touchdowns and ran for 11 more but has struggled in some big games.

A.T. PERRY, WR First-team All-ACC pick was third in the nation with 15 receiving TDs and posted second-best season in school history with 1,293 receiving yards.

RONDELL BOTHROYD, DE Finished third in the conference in tackles for a loss (16.5); also forced two fumbles, recovered two and blocked a kick.

KEY LOSSES

ZACH TOM, LT NFL prospect was named first-team All-ACC and second-team All-America by several publications. Also named league's top student-athlete.

JACQUARII ROBERSON, WR Second-team All-ACC slot receiver caught 133 passes for 2,004 yards and 16 touchdowns over his final two seasons.

NICK SCIBA, K First-team All-ACC selection owns the NCAA record for most consecutive field goals (34) and is the second-most accurate kicker in NCAA history (89.9 percent).

RISING STAR

The Deacons need a lot of help at linebacker, so look for redshirt freshman **DYLAN HAZEN** to make a big impact. Hazen needs more strength, but his game is speed. In four games last year, he had 10 tackles, including one for a loss, and forced a fumble.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Demond Claiborne, RB, King William, VA	★★★★
2	Wesley Grimes, WR, Raleigh, NC	★★★★
3	Elijah Hall, DL, Shelby, NC	★★★
4	Derrell Johnson II, OL, Jacksonville, FL	★★★
5	Zamari Stevenson, CB, Statesville, NC	★★★
6	Jaydn Girard, WR, Tampa, FL	★★★
7	Brett Griffis, QB, Ashburn, VA	★★★
8	Jalen Swindell, DL, Charlotte, NC	★★★
9	Andre Hodge, CB, Fort Mill, SC	★★★
10	Tommy Bebie, LB, Rocky River, OH	★★★
11	Tate Carney, RB, Mocksville, NC	★★★
12	Harry Lodge, TE, Belmont, MA	★★★
13	Jamare Glasker, CB, Oxon Hill, MD	★★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite

After taking Wake Forest to five straight bowl games but never winning more than eight games in a season, Dave Clawson broke through in 2021: an AP top-10 ranking, an ACC Atlantic Division title and 11 wins, including the Gator Bowl. The Deacons again return players with starting experience at almost every position and add transfer Kobie Turner, an FCS second-team All-American at defensive tackle. Clawson has changed the perception of a program with a lengthy losing tradition.

"People now when they play Wake Forest have a little more respect for who we are and what we've done," Clawson says. "There's been times we've been able to beat people who maybe didn't take us seriously. Those days are probably over."

The offense commands respect under coordinator Warren Ruggiero, averaging at least 30 points a game in each season since 2017. Last year, the Deacons averaged 41 points per game, fourth in the nation. The defense struggled to keep up, finishing 88th in scoring and 111th against the run. The Deacons hung on with a big-play approach: tied for fifth in turnovers gained and tied for 17th in tackles for a loss. Clawson brought in Brad Lambert, a former WFU assistant under Jim Grobe, from Purdue to run this year's defense, as well as adding two new assistants.

OFFENSE The Deacons lose their top rusher and lineman, but there's little reason to believe that those losses will slow down this juggernaut. Two players who missed last season because of injury will return in receiver Donavon Greene and lineman Je'Vionte' Nash. In the last two games Greene played in 2020, he caught 14 passes for 292 yards and two touchdowns. Nash, a seventh-year senior, will move from right to left tackle. The other four offensive linemen — led by third-team All-ACC guard Sean Maginn — started all but one game last year and have 90 career starts total. As the rest of the offense, finding depth will be a key.

Quarterback Sam Hartman has plenty of experience with making decisions in Ruggerio's long mesh-point attack, and his improved running ability opened up the passing game. Hartman was third in the nation in points responsible for and threw for 4,228 yards, the sixth most in ACC history. Hartman has struggled in key moments, however. In 2020, he imploded in the final two games, and last season, against UNC, NC State and Pittsburgh, he completed fewer than 50 percent of his passes and threw nine interceptions.

Hartman found the 6'5" A.T. Perry 71 times last year, and his pairing with Greene should be explosive on the outside. Wake Forest makes stars out of slot receivers, and Taylor Morin (43 catches) will move inside, backed by breakout candidate Ke'Shawn Williams (27).

The backfield will be a committee approach again, led by Justice Ellison (5.1 yards per carry) and Christian Turner, who both gained more than 500 yards last season. The Deacons finally returned to using the tight end

SAM HARTMAN

Jacob Kupferman/Getty Images

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	VMI
Sept. 10	at Vanderbilt
Sept. 17	Liberty
Sept. 24	Clemson
Oct. 1	at Florida State
Oct. 8	Army
Oct. 22	Boston College
Oct. 29	at Louisville
Nov. 5	at NC State
Nov. 12	North Carolina
Nov. 19	Syracuse
Nov. 26	at Duke

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 11-3, 7-1 ACC

Sept. 3	Old Dominion	W	42-10
Sept. 11	Norfolk State	W	41-16
Sept. 18	Florida State	W	35-14
Sept. 24	at Virginia	W	37-17
Oct. 2	Louisville	W	37-34
Oct. 9	at Syracuse (ot)	W	40-37
Oct. 23	at Army	W	70-56
Oct. 30	Duke	W	45-7
Nov. 6	at North Carolina	L	55-58
Nov. 13	NC State	W	45-42
Nov. 20	at Clemson	L	27-48
Nov. 27	at Boston College	W	41-10
Dec. 4	vs. Pittsburgh #	L	21-45
Dec. 31	vs. Rutgers %	W	38-10

#Charlotte, NC %Gator Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	ACC	NATIONAL
Scoring	41.0 ppg	2	4
Rushing	160.5 ypg	10	68
Passing	307.4 ypg	4	12
Total	467.9 ypg	4	11
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**ACC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	28.9 ppg	10	88
Rushing	195.5 ypg	12	111
Passing	217.8 ypg	5	49
Total	413.3 ypg	10	91
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**ACC**	**NATIONAL**
+9	+0.64	1	17

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	31.4	14
Defense	29.1	71
Margin	+2.3	30
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	46.0%	33
Defense	46.1%	107
Margin	-0.1%	71
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	6.1	52
Defense	6.0	93
Margin	+0.1	71
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	5.0	5
Defense	4.2	72
Margin	+0.8	14
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	1.8	47
Actual	9	14
Margin	+7.2	11

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

0.238

Wake Forest averaged 0.238 EPA/pass in 2021, ninth in the nation. Wake Forest passed 6.8 percent more than the average team.

46.5%

The Deacons had difficulty stopping the run in 2021. Opponents averaged a 46.5 percent rushing success rate against Wake Forest; the Deacons allowed 6.12 yards per play, ranking 118th in rushing efficiency.

53.3%

Opponents had trouble getting the Wake offense off the field. The Demon Deacons converted 53.3 percent of their third-down attempts in 2021, ranking fourth in the nation in that category.

as a receiving threat last year, as Brandon Chapman and Blake Whiteheart combined for 27 catches and six touchdowns. WFU will miss the departed Chapman's blocking and needs to find Whiteheart's backup.

DEFENSE Lambert inherits a defense that allowed 42 or more points five times, although it did create 29 turnovers. The Deacons struggled at the second level, especially against the run, and that linebacker unit is full of question marks again. Ryan Smenda Jr. (83 tackles) and Chase Jones (47) return, but they will have to be faster to the ball. There's little experience behind them, and the rover position will be up for grabs. Wake Forest hopes former Navy transfer Chelen Garnes can emerge.

Disruptive end Rondell Bothroyd was a glaring omission from the All-ACC teams. The other end spot is a question mark, though: Jasheen Davis — who received significant Power 5 attention as a recruit — showed flashes (8.5 tackles for a loss) but was inconsistent in his first full year, and oft-injured Jacorey Johns hasn't lived up to his potential.

The secondary lost a lot of talent but, if it can stay healthy, still has a chance to be good. At corner, Gavin Holmes and Caelen Carson are both emerging stars, and safety Malik Mustapha showed big-play ability as a true freshman. Former walk-on Nick Andersen had a disappointing year after a strong 2020.

SPECIALISTS Redshirt freshman Matthew Dennis will have the difficult job of filling the kicking shoe of Nick Sciba, one of the best kickers in college football history. Punter Ivan Mora is recovering from a leg injury suffered in the Gator Bowl but is expected to be ready for the season and could be one of the ACC's best. Wake Forest's return units have gone from bad to solid over the last two years, led by punt returner Morin. A healthy Greene could add a threat on kickoffs.

FINAL ANALYSIS Another eight-win season and a bowl game seem probable, and if a few breaks fall the Deacons' way, another challenge for the Atlantic title as well. But injuries always seem to be an issue for the Deacons late in the season, and this team is searching for depth across almost every unit. Clawson will have to hope some younger players develop quickly. The offense should be at the top of the league again, so the key will be whether Lambert can improve the defense and keep the turnovers coming.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (9)

WR	**11**	**Donavon Greene (So.)**	25	Horatio Fields (Fr.)
WR	**9**	**A.T. Perry (Jr.)**	80	Jahmal Banks (So.)
WR	**83**	**Taylor Morin (So.)**	13	Ke'Shawn Williams (So.)
LT	**53**	**Je'Vionte' Nash (Sr.)**	52	Spencer Clapp (Sr.)
LG	**79**	**Sean Maginn (Sr.)**	77	George Sell (Fr.)
C	**55**	**Michael Jurgens (Jr.)**	74	Luke Petitbon (So.)
RG	**59**	**Loic Ngassam Nya (Sr.)**	73	Zach Vaughan (Fr.)
RT	**62**	**DeVonte Gordon (So.)**	71	CJ Elmonus (So.)
TE	85	Blake Whiteheart (Jr.)	20	Cameron Hite (So.)
QB	**10**	**Sam Hartman (Jr.)**	15	Michael Kern (So.)
RB	14	Justice Ellison (So.)	0	Christian Turner (Jr.)

DEFENSE (6)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	**40**	**Rondell Bothroyd (Jr.)**	35	Kendron Wayman (So.)
DT	2	Kobie Turner (Sr.)	72	Tyler Williams (Sr.)
DT	**95**	**Dion Bergan Jr. (Sr.)**	91	Kevin Pointer (So.)
DE	30	Jasheen Davis (So.)	**4**	**Jacorey Johns (Jr.)**
LB	21	Chase Jones (Jr.)	50	Dylan Hazen (Fr.)
LB	**5**	**Ryan Smenda Jr. (Sr.)**	15	Jaylen Hudson (So.)
CB	24	Gavin Holmes (So.)	8	Isaiah Wingfield (Sr.)
CB	**29**	**Caelen Carson (So.)**	25	J.J. Roberts (So.)
ROV	9	Chelen Garnes (Jr.)	22	AJ Williams (So.)
SS	**45**	**Nick Andersen (So.)**	27	Malik Mustapha (So.)
FS	20	Coby Davis (Sr.)		Brendon Harris (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	99	Matthew Dennis (Fr.)	**KR**	13	Ke'Shawn Williams (So.)
P	36	Ivan Mora (So.)	**PR**	83	Taylor Morin (So.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Sam Hartman	**508**	**299**	**4,228**	**39**	**14**
Michael Kern	**5**	**2**	**67**	**0**	**0**
Leo Kelly	4	1	8	0	1
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Christian Beal-Smith	131	604	4.6	7	
Justice Ellison	**107**	**541**	**5.1**	**7**	
Christian Turner	**126**	**506**	**4.0**	**5**	
Sam Hartman	**117**	**363**	**3.1**	**11**	
Quinton Cooley	**45**	**156**	**3.5**	**1**	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
A.T. Perry	**71**	**1,293**	**18.2**	**15**	
Jaquarii Roberson	71	1,078	15.2	8	
Taylor Morin	**43**	**621**	**14.4**	**5**	
Donald Stewart	33	388	11.8	1	
Ke'Shawn Williams	**27**	**404**	**15.0**	**3**	

KICKING: Nick Sciba, 23-25 FGs, 134 pts.
TACKLES: Luke Masterson, 85; **Ryan Smenda Jr., 83**
SACKS: Luiji Vilain, 9.0
INTERCEPTIONS: Traveon Redd, 3

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE DEMON DEACONS

Opposing Coaches Size Up Wake Forest

"They're still gonna be really good. The list of places that could come and get [Dave] Clawson out of there is getting smaller and smaller. They're turning into a Kentucky-type of program for this league because they've got a really great system and a head coach that could probably be somewhere bigger that they've surrounded with enough to keep him in town. … With [Sam] Hartman back, you can absolutely expect them to put up a lot of points in most games. They've got their flavor of RPO down to an exact science. It's not impossible to stop, but they can just absolutely rip against an undisciplined man defense. … [New DC] Brad Lambert is a really good hire for them; he and the guys he's bringing over understand recruiting in that area. I think they'll scrap some of that stuff and change up their looks. They had a strange philosophy where they were a bend-don't-break scheme until they'd go zero blitz on you. … They're never going to match up in terms of recruiting or the 'get off the bus' look, but they have a core with Hartman and those receivers, especially A.T. Perry. They lose Jaquarii Roberson, but they've got a lot of talent there, and I think the entire O-line is back. So, yeah, they're in a place now where they can compete with anybody in the league when they have the right quarterback who understands how to read in that system."

DUKE BLUE DEVILS

National Forecast: 110 • ACC Coastal Prediction: 7 • Projected Record: 2-10, 0-8 ACC

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Mike Elko
RECORD AT SCHOOL: First Season
CAREER RECORD: First Season
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Kevin Johns
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Robb Smith
LOCATION: Durham, NC
STADIUM: Wallace Wade Stadium (40,004)

KEY BLUE DEVILS

SHAKA HEYWARD, LB Duke's leading tackler (98) last season, Heyward tallied a team-best 10.5 TFLs. Key veteran has already played in 27 games with 17 starts.

DEWAYNE CARTER, DT A force in the middle of the defensive line who recorded 4.5 sacks and forced four fumbles in 2021 and was a team captain.

JALON CALHOUN, WR Experienced playmaker entering his senior season having started since his freshman year. Caught 56 passes for 718 yards last season.

KEY LOSSES

MATAEO DURANT, RB The lone bright spot on the ACC's lowest-scoring offense. The first-team All-ACC pick set a Duke single-season rushing record (1,241) and scored 11 touchdowns before turning professional.

LUMMIE YOUNG IV, S After playing in 34 games at Duke, Young transferred to Tulane after finishing second in tackles (64) and forcing two fumbles for the Blue Devils in 2021.

JAKE BOBO, WR Big, sure-handed receiver is using his extra season of eligibility at UCLA after leading Duke in receptions (74) and receiving yards (794) last season.

RISING STAR

An early enrollee in January, **VINCENT ANTHONY JR.** impressed the new coaching staff during spring practice at defensive end. The 6'6", 235-pounder from Durham's Jordan High School showed speed on the edge with athleticism reminiscent of Chris Rumph II, a former Blue Devil now with the NFL's Chargers.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Vincent Anthony Jr., DL, Durham, NC	★★★★
2	Steven Nahmias, OL, Atlanta, GA	★★★
3	Jaden Watkins, WR, Asheville, NC	★★★
4	Chandler Rivers, CB, Beaumont, TX	★★★
5	Mehki Wall, WR, Greensboro, NC	★★★
6	Kenzy Paul, ATH, Chattanooga, TN	★★★
7	Nathan Vail, S, Kennesaw, GA	★★★
8	Wesley Williams, TE, Haymarket, VA	★★★
9	Henry Belin IV, QB, Bronx, NY	★★★
10	Travis Bates, RB, Tampa, FL	★★★
11	Eric Weatherly, RB, Jacksonville, FL	★★★
12	Terry Moore, ATH, Washington, NC	★★★
13	Matt Craycraft, OT, Dallas, TX	★★★
14	Brian Parker II, OT, Cincinnati, OH	★★★
15	Jeremiah Hasley, LB, Gibsonia, PA	★★★
16	Carter Wyatt, LB, Shallotte, NC	★★★
17	Jake Taylor, TE, Raleigh, NC	★★★
18	Cade Anders, TE, Tifton, GA	★★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite

Despite all that David Cutcliffe accomplished during his 14 seasons as Duke's head coach, the Blue Devils' utter inability to be competitive in ACC games over the last two seasons finally led the school to replace him.

Mike Elko brought with him a stellar reputation as a defensive coordinator, with recent stops at Wake Forest, Notre Dame and Texas A&M, to the job when he took over in December. He's now in charge of a program that has not played in a bowl game since 2018 and has lost 17 of its last 18 ACC games.

Elko, though, walked in remembering the Duke teams that he competed against several years ago during his Wake Forest tenure. Back then, the Blue Devils were in the midst of going to bowls in six of seven seasons, including winning the 2013 ACC Coastal Division championship.

"I came here in 2014," Elko says, "and played a Duke team that was extremely talented, extremely physical, and beat us all over the field. So my experience of Duke is just that."

While that was a long time ago, Elko is working to bring back those days of Duke football.

It figures to take a season or two for Elko to turn things around in Durham, since the Blue Devils were last in the ACC in both scoring defense (39.8 points allowed per game) and scoring offense (22.8 points scored per game) last season while logging their first winless ACC season since 2007.

Still, Elko talks like he expects immediate results. "It's never ever not going to be our goal to win now," Elko said after the spring game. "That's the only focus we have. We're not coming in here to build something for four years from now. We're going to put our foot on the gas to go as hard as we possibly can, to win as much as we possibly can as fast as we can. That's never not going to be the goal here."

OFFENSE The Blue Devils lost leading rusher Mataeo Durant to pro football and their starting quarterback (Gunnar Holmberg) and receptions leader (Jake Bobo) to the transfer portal.

So Elko and Duke offensive coordinator Kevin Johns are rebuilding with a pair of sophomore quarterbacks, Riley Leonard and Jordan Moore, battling for the starting job. Redshirt juniors Jaylen Coleman and Jordan Waters are the most experienced running backs, but younger backs like Jaquez Moore and Eric Weatherly are pushing for playing time.

None, though, looks capable of another 1,200-yard season like Durant produced.

Duke does have senior receiver Jalon Calhoun returning for his fourth season as a starter, but he's caught only five touchdown passes over the last two seasons. The Blue Devils still need the big-play threat that's been missing the last three seasons to emerge.

At least the offensive line returns experienced players after blocking well enough for Durant to set the school's single-season rushing record in 2021. Starting tackles

SHAKA HEYWARD

Reagan Lunn/Duke Athletics

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	Temple
Sept. 10	at Northwestern
Sept. 17	North Carolina A&T
Sept. 24	at Kansas
Oct. 1	Virginia
Oct. 8	at Georgia Tech
Oct. 15	North Carolina
Oct. 22	at Miami (Fla.)
Nov. 4	at Boston College
Nov. 12	Virginia Tech
Nov. 19	at Pittsburgh
Nov. 26	Wake Forest

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 3-9, 0-8 ACC

Sept. 3	at Charlotte	L	28-31
Sept. 10	North Carolina A&T	W	45-17
Sept. 18	Northwestern	W	30-23
Sept. 25	Kansas	W	52-33
Oct. 2	at North Carolina	L	7-38
Oct. 9	Georgia Tech	L	27-31
Oct. 16	at Virginia	L	0-48
Oct. 30	at Wake Forest	L	7-45
Nov. 6	Pittsburgh	L	29-54
Nov. 13	at Virginia Tech	L	17-48
Nov. 18	Louisville	L	22-62
Nov. 27	Miami	L	10-47

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	ACC	NATIONAL
Scoring	22.8 ppg	14	102
Rushing	179.7 ypg	5	50
Passing	237.9 ypg	7	64
Total	417.6 ypg	7	54
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**ACC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	39.8 ppg	14	127
Rushing	206.2 ypg	13	117
Passing	311.8 ypg	14	129
Total	517.9 ypg	14	130
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**ACC**	**NATIONAL**
-7	-0.58	12	108

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	28.4	80
Defense	29.1	70
Margin	-0.7	72
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	42.9%	66
Defense	45.5%	102
Margin	-2.7%	94
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	5.4	96
Defense	7.2	123
Margin	-1.8	122
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	3.2	124
Defense	5.0	126
Margin	-1.8	129
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	3.1	25
Actual	-7	107
Margin	-10.1	128

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

0.245

Duke allowed 0.245 EPA/pass in 2021 (126th in the FBS), and teams ran 6.2 percent less often against the Blue Devils than the average team.

40.2%

Duke's passing offense ranked 64th in the FBS with a 40.2 percent success rate but only 91st in explosiveness with -0.029 EPA/pass. The Blue Devils threw nine touchdowns and eight interceptions on the season, allowing 16 sacks.

44.4%

Duke converted on 44.4 percent of all third downs, averaging a 43.9 percent passing success rate and a 45.2 percent rushing success rate on third downs.

Graham Barton and John Gelotte anchor that group. Also, Duke added guard Andre Harris (Arkansas State) and tackle Chance Lytle (Colorado) through the transfer portal.

DEFENSE The Blue Devils have some experienced players in their front seven but figure to face some tough times thanks to a young secondary.

Up front, defensive tackle DeWayne Carter and linebacker Shaka Heyward are back after solid seasons on a unit that struggled mightily as a group. The Blue Devils allowed an ACC-worst 517.9 total yards per game, dogged by poor tackling and coverage errors.

Youth in the secondary doesn't normally bode well, especially at the Power 5 level, and Duke's secondary figures to be a work in progress, which could lead to more long days this fall. The main experienced guys atop the depth chart exiting spring practice were juniors Tony Davis (cornerback) and Jaylen Stinson (safety). But younger players, like true freshman Chandler Rivers and sophomore Cameron Bergeron, will be asked to contribute.

SPECIALISTS This could be the strongest part of Duke's team. Kicker Charlie Ham returns after not missing an extra point last season. He does have room for improvement on field goals, where he made just 14-of-20 after being successful on 13-of-15 as a freshman in 2020.

Punter Porter Wilson was third in the ACC in net punting average (44.8) during his busy sophomore season last fall.

Duke added a graduate transfer long snapper from UMass, Evan Deckers, at the semester break. He took part in spring practice to get comfortable with his new teammates. That's a plus.

FINAL ANALYSIS Elko and his new staff take over a program that's been the ACC's worst on the field over the last two seasons, so there's plenty of work to be done. They'll be young at quarterback and running back, so expect both Leonard and Moore to be part of Duke's plan on offense, with Leonard the better passer and the speedy Moore able to make big plays with his legs.

Progress this season will be determined by Duke's ability to be competitive against P5 teams, particularly in ACC play. The Blue Devils have to prove they can play at this level, something they didn't do over the last two seasons, and build from there.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)				
WR	**5**	**Jalon Calhoun (Sr.)**	1	Jontavis Robertson (Jr.)
WR	3	Darrell Harding Jr. (Sr.)	85	Sahmir Hagans (So.)
WR	6	Eli Pancol (Sr.)	18	Malik Bowen-Sims (Jr.)
LT	**62**	**Graham Barton (Jr.)**		Chance Lytle (Sr.)
LG	**71**	**Maurice McIntyre (Sr.)**	75	Calib Perez (So.)
C	52	Addison Penn (So.)	64	Brian Foley (Sr.)
RG	**63**	**Jacob Monk (Sr.)**	65	Elijah Wroten (Jr.)
RT	**70**	**John Gelotte (Jr.)**	77	Justin Pickett (So.)
TE	82	Cole Finney (So.)	81	Nicky Dalmolin (Jr,)
QB	13	Riley Leonard (So.)	8	Jordan Moore (So.)
RB	22	Jaylen Coleman (Jr.)	7	Jordan Waters (Jr.)

DEFENSE (4)		Returning Starters in **BOLD**		
DE	**94**	**R.J. Oben (Jr.)**	91	Ahmad Craig (Jr.)
DT	55	Ja'Mion Franklin (Sr.)	95	Trey Brown III (So.)
DT	**90**	**DeWayne Carter (Jr.)**	99	Christian Rorie (Jr.)
DE	59	Michael Reese (Jr.)	19	Vincent Anthony Jr. (Fr.)
LB	**42**	**Shaka Heyward (Sr.)**	12	Tre Freeman (So.)
LB	**8**	**Dorian Mausi (Jr.)**	43	Rocky Shelton II (Jr.)
CB	26	Joshua Pickett (So.)	0	Chandler Rivers (Fr.)
CB	13	Tony Davis (Jr.)	4	Cameron Bergeron (So.)
S	2	Jaylen Stinson (Jr.)	15	Placide Djungu-Sungu (So.)
S	14	Trent Broadnax (So.)	17	Da'Quan Johnson (Jr.)
S	30	Brandon Johnson (So.)	11	Isaiah Fisher-Smith (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	44	Charlie Ham (Jr.)	**KR**	2	Jaylen Stinson (Jr.)
P	98	Porter Wilson (Jr.)	**PR**	85	Sahmir Hagans (So.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Gunnar Holmberg	324	217	2,358	7	8
Riley Leonard	**62**	**37**	**381**	**1**	**1**
Jordan Moore	**19**	**9**	**95**	**1**	**0**
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Mataeo Durant	255	1,241	4.9	9	
Jordan Waters	**39**	**197**	**5.1**	**1**	
Jordan Moore	**43**	**183**	**4.3**	**3**	
Riley Leonard	**47**	**173**	**3.7**	**2**	
Gunnar Holmberg	88	167	1.9	6	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Jake Bobo	74	794	10.7	1	
Jalon Calhoun	**56**	**718**	**12.8**	**3**	
Mataeo Durant	27	256	9.5	2	
Eli Pancol	**17**	**233**	**13.7**	**1**	
Jontavis Robertson	**17**	**115**	**6.8**	**0**	

KICKING: **Charlie Ham, 14-20 FGs, 74 pts.**
TACKLES: **Shaka Heyward, 98;** Lummie Young IV, 64
SACKS: **R.J. Oben, 5.0**
INTERCEPTIONS: Leonard Johnson, 2; Jeremiah Lewis, 2

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE BLUE DEVILS

Opposing Coaches Size Up Duke

"Check back in with these guys down the road. It's going to be bad for a bit, but Mike Elko is a really smart hire for this program. He hired a really sharp staff, picked off the guy from Wake, and they're going to overhaul the talent evaluation and strip everything down. … The way things ended for Cut [David Cutcliffe] was really rough, but when the problem is your signature area, the quarterback play and the offense, you can't really explain that away. It got to a point where a lot of us thought he was just tired. Defenses were able to call out plays before the snap because they were so tendency heavy that they ran only one or two things out of a particular formation. … This compares a little bit to [Jeff] Hafley at BC coming from Ohio State: Don't think about Elko as the A&M guy coming to Duke; think of him as the guy who can sign, develop and scheme. Duke is a lot closer to Notre Dame than A&M in that way. He's going to build a system, and he doesn't have to take any shortcuts because of the deal they gave him. They want a long-term solution, and he wants to be there for the haul. … This year, they're going to be bad, and they have space to figure out what works and what doesn't. … Kevin Johns is a good OC; it's possible they'll look better at the end of this season than they did at the end of last year. But this is a talent-deficient roster with very little depth. It's going to take some time."

GEORGIA TECH YELLOW JACKETS

National Forecast: 88 • ACC Coastal Prediction: 6 • Projected Record: 3-9, 2-6 ACC

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Geoff Collins
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 9-25 (3 years)
CAREER RECORD: 24-35 (5 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Chip Long
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Andrew Thacker
LOCATION: Atlanta, GA
STADIUM: Bobby Dodd Stadium (55,000)

KEY YELLOW JACKETS

JEFF SIMS, QB Though he made a modest leap from his first to second season, he's got the physical tools to be much more productive if the new staff gets through to him.

CHARLIE THOMAS, LB He will be the unquestioned leader of the defense, both in terms of experience and productivity, having accounted for 26.5 tackles for a loss in his career.

DONTAE SMITH, RB He has made the most of limited opportunities since 2019, averaging 6.1 yards per carry with seven TDs while also catching 15 balls out of the backfield. Now he'll have a starring role in the offense.

KEY LOSSES

JAHMYR GIBBS, RB The fact that Alabama plans to give him a huge role in its offense says a lot about the level of talent that Tech has lost here.

QUEZ JACKSON, LB Despite having two seasons of eligibility remaining, Jackson decided to enter the NFL Draft after leading the team with 103 tackles at the linebacker position, 46 of which were unassisted.

JORDAN DOMINECK, DE Along with defensive end Jared Ivey, who transferred to Ole Miss, the loss of Domineck (to Arkansas) hurts because he had developed into one of the ACC's more promising edge rushers, logging 3.5 sacks and three forced fumbles last season.

RISING STAR

Wide receiver **NATE MCCOLLUM**, a former four-star prospect, wasn't high in the pecking order to start 2021, with more experienced players ahead of him in the receivers' room. But after catching 13 passes for 108 yards, including a 44-yard touchdown against Pittsburgh, he's a player the Yellow Jackets are counting on to emerge as the top slot receiver and one of Jeff Sims' most important targets.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Antonio Martin, RB, Fairburn, GA	★★★★
2	Jaylin Marshall, S, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	★★★★
3	Zach Pyron, QB, Pinson, AL	★★★
4	K.J. Miles, DL, Jersey City, NJ	★★★
5	Jamie Felix, RB, Kingsland, GA	★★★
6	Tyler Gibson, OT, Alpharetta, GA	★★★
7	Horace Lockett, DL, Atlanta, GA	★★★
8	Jullian Lewis, WR, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	★★★
9	D.J. Moore, WR, Lawrenceville, GA	★★★
10	Kyle Efford, LB, Dacula, GA	★★★
11	Clayton Powell-Lee, S, Atlanta, GA	★★★
12	Brandon Best, OL, Alpharetta, GA	★★★
13	Bobby Mooney, OT, Long Beach, CA	★★★
14	Rodney Shelley, CB, Fairburn, GA	★★★
15	Aidan Birr, K, Kennedale, TX	★★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite

A rush of players to the transfer portal following a disheartening end to the 2021 season and a significant shakeup of the coaching staff have left Geoff Collins in a difficult position.

Despite the acknowledgment that there would be rough waters as Georgia Tech transitioned away from the Paul Johnson era and his triple-option system, Collins enters his fourth year with an unhappy fan base and real pressure to show progress on the field.

It would be one thing if there were discernible momentum undergirding those results and clear evidence of a breakthrough in the near future. Instead, the Yellow Jackets have almost as many personnel questions now as they did when Collins got the job and are banking on new assistants to make an immediate impact through development and scheme tweaks.

JEFF SIMS

Al Kooistra

OFFENSE Losing Jahmyr Gibbs, who transferred to Alabama after being Georgia Tech's leading rusher and second-leading receiver last season, is a major blow to an offense that hoped to become more dynamic.

Though Collins was able to supplement his skill positions through the portal with Hassan Hall from Louisville (7.2 ypc on 38 attempts) and Dylan McDuffie from Buffalo (1,049 rushing yards and 11 TDs), this is almost a total reset for coordinator Chip Long, who was brought in to replace Dave Patenaude and install a more aggressive scheme. Long, the former coordinator at Memphis (2016), Notre Dame (2017-19) and Tulane (2021), will make some noticeable scheme changes, such as less shotgun and utilizing formations with multiple tight ends.

But ultimately, the Yellow Jackets are either going to need quarterback Jeff Sims to take a major step forward in his third season as a starter or hope that Akron transfer Zach Gibson, who was highly accurate in his five starts last season, is good enough to beat him out. Sims enters as the favorite because of his size, experience and dual-threat potential but has been prone to indecision and mistakes, with 20 interceptions in 18 career games. Georgia Tech hopes that working with new quarterbacks coach Chris Weinke, the former Heisman winner, will unlock the next level of his development.

The Jackets are also going to need some of their young receivers who have been in the program, like Malik Rutherford and Kalani Norris, to become reliable playmakers and supplement senior Malachi Carter, who tied for the team lead with 37 receptions last year.

Perhaps the biggest concerns, though, are up front. Besides 6'6", 333-pound right tackle Jordan Williams, who looked like a potential star last season, this is an inexperienced unit that needs immediate production from Alabama transfer Pierce Quick, who could slide into the left tackle position, and Clemson transfer Paul Tchio, who could start at right guard.

DEFENSE Coordinator Andrew Thacker was spared in Tech's coaching purge despite his unit allowing 455.2 yards per game and ranking at or near the bottom of the

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 5	Clemson
Sept. 10	Western Carolina
Sept. 17	Ole Miss
Sept. 24	at UCF
Oct. 1	at Pittsburgh
Oct. 8	Duke
Oct. 20	Virginia
Oct. 29	at Florida State
Nov. 5	at Virginia Tech
Nov. 12	Miami (Fla.)
Nov. 19	at North Carolina
Nov. 26	at Georgia

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 3-9, 2-6 ACC

Sept. 4	Northern Illinois	L	21-22
Sept. 11	Kennesaw State	W	45-17
Sept. 18	at Clemson	L	8-14
Sept. 25	North Carolina	W	45-22
Oct. 2	Pittsburgh	L	21-52
Oct. 9	at Duke	W	31-27
Oct. 23	at Virginia	L	40-48
Oct. 30	Virginia Tech	L	17-26
Nov. 6	at Miami (Fla.)	L	30-33
Nov. 13	Boston College	L	30-41
Nov. 20	at Notre Dame	L	0-55
Nov. 27	Georgia	L	0-45

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	ACC	NATIONAL
Scoring	23.8 ppg	12	95
Rushing	169.0 ypg	7	57
Passing	198.3 ypg	10	97
Total	367.3 ypg	11	93

DEFENSE	PER GAME	ACC	NATIONAL
Scoring	33.5 ppg	13	110
Rushing	182.2 ypg	11	100
Passing	273.0 ypg	13	121
Total	455.2 ypg	12	117

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	ACC	NATIONAL
-2	-0.17	10	81

ACC in other key statistical categories like sacks (20) and interceptions (three). The rationale is that Collins did not want to depart from the 4-2-5 scheme he ran with a lot of success at Temple, and there's belief within the program that a number of younger players they've developed are poised for success.

Having said that, this is a unit that lost eight of its top 11 tacklers either to graduation or transfer and will need several players who got a bit of experience last season to step up, particularly in the secondary and the pass-rushing positions like sophomore ends Kyle Kennard (3.5 TFLs), Noah Collins and tackle Zeek Biggers. Georgia Tech got a significant late addition up front in Memphis transfer Morris Joseph, who had 4.5 TFLs last season and will likely slide into a starting tackle position next to Makius Scott, who filled a backup role last season after transferring from South Carolina.

If that group can hold up, Tech could showcase some big-time playmaking ability in the middle of the defense with senior linebackers Charlie Thomas (70 tackles, 10 TFLs, three sacks) and Ayinde Eley (90 tackles, three QB hurries) along with safety Jaylon King.

Collins says there's been "marked improvement" from a young group of talented defensive backs. Corner Kenyatta Watson, a transfer from Texas, seems particularly poised for a breakthrough after a strong spring.

"I just think that group as a whole has bonded at a really high level," Collins says.

SPECIALISTS Gavin Stewart and Jude Kelley are likely to compete for the open job at placekicker, while David Shanahan averaged 41.5 yards per punt as a freshman. Bringing in Hall should juice the return game, an area of struggle last season. He's taken back 95 kicks for an average of 24.9 yards with two scores.

FINAL ANALYSIS Collins, who came into Atlanta as a relentless marketer with a constant social media presence, has taken a lower profile this offseason. He knows that talking is useless: It's time to win. But that won't be easy, given the inexperienced roster and a brutal schedule that opens with Clemson and includes nonconference games again Ole Miss, UCF and Georgia. Even if there is some improvement, it may be difficult to break out of the Jackets' run of three-win seasons.

Given the amount of turnover among players and coaches, this season will either be a new beginning for Collins or the beginning of the end. With so many questions surrounding the roster, it's fair to be skeptical.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (2)

WR	**7**	**Malachi Carter (Sr.)**	21	Leo Blackburn (Fr.)
WR	8	Nate McCollum (So.)	26	Malik Rutherford (Fr.)
WR	5	Kalani Norris (Jr.)	14	Jaylon King (Jr.)
LT	70	Pierce Quick (So.)	75	Jakiah Leftwich (Fr.)
LG	60	Paula Vaipulu (So.)	79	William Lay III (Sr.)
C	72	Weston Franklin (So.)	58	Will Scissum (So.)
RG	57	Paul Tchio (So.)	79	William Lay III (Sr.)
RT	**54**	**Jordan Williams (So.)**	75	Jakiah Leftwich (Fr.)
TE	18	Peje' Harris (Jr.)	81	Luke Benson (Jr.)
QB	10	Jeff Sims (So.)	15	Zach Gibson (So.)
RB	4	Dontae Smith (Jr.)	3	Hassan Hall (Sr.)

DEFENSE (2)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	43	Noah Collins (So.)	6	Keion White (Jr.)
DT		Morris Joseph (Sr.)	88	Zeek Biggers (So.)
DT	90	Makius Scott (So.)	5	T.K. Chimedza (Jr.)
DE	31	Kyle Kennard (So.)	32	Sylvain Yondjouen (Jr.)
LB	**25**	**Charlie Thomas (Sr.)**	40	Trenilyas Tatum (So.)
LB	**10**	**Ayinde Eley (Sr.)**	17	Demetrius Knight II (Jr.)
CB	7	Zamari Walton (Jr.)	20	LaMiles Brooks (Fr.)
CB	12	Kenyatta Watson II (So.)	21	Jalen Huff (Fr.)
NB	16	Myles Sims (Jr.)	24	Kenan Johnson (So.)
S	14	Jaylon King (Jr.)	18	Derrik Allen (Jr.)
S	22	Kaleb Edwards (So.)	26	Ahmari Harvey (Fr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	87	Jude Kelley (Fr.)	KR	3	Hassan Hall (Sr.)
P	43	David Shanahan (So.)	PR	3	Hassan Hall (Sr.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Jeff Sims	**188**	**113**	**1,468**	**12**	**7**
Jordan Yates	153	91	908	6	3

Rushing	ATT	YDS	AVG	TD
Jahmyr Gibbs	143	746	5.2	4
Jordan Mason	87	439	5.0	1
Dontae Smith	**68**	**378**	**5.6**	**4**
Jeff Sims	**70**	**372**	**5.3**	**4**
Jordan Yates	64	82	1.3	2

Receiving	REC	YDS	AVG	TD
Malachi Carter	**37**	**489**	**13.2**	**2**
Kyric McGowan	37	467	12.6	7
Jahmyr Gibbs	36	470	13.1	2
Adonicas Sanders	29	362	12.5	3
Nate McCollum	**13**	**108**	**8.3**	**1**

KICKING: Brent Cimaglia, 11-15 FGs, 64 pts.
TACKLES: Quez Jackson, 103; **Ayinde Eley, 90**
SACKS: Jordan Domineck, 3.5
INTERCEPTIONS: **Charlie Thomas, 2**

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE YELLOW JACKETS

Opposing Coaches Size Up Georgia Tech

"Honestly, it's almost impossible to see a way in which Geoff Collins survives this season. Every good player on defense is gone or in the portal. The best player they've recruited is going to be starting at Alabama. They have a conference schedule that's tough on its own and a nonconference slate that looks like it was designed to get this guy fired. … Three years in, coaches are beginning to question what the plan was on offense. The transfer quarterback will be a better fit for the new scheme. Chip [Long] knows what he's doing, but it's a really bare cupboard. The problem is, you can still see the transition out of the triple option on their tape from the end of last year. … They've recruited a bunch of guys that other staffs think are overrated. That's fine, you have differences in evaluations, but they aren't a development program either. … They had one of the worst secondaries I've ever seen last year, and all those guys are gone, so maybe that's a positive move? The bigger problem is that the guys up front who could help are gone, too, so they're going to need multiple unknowns to step up if they're going to do anything. … The failure here has been recruiting. It's been the exact thing he made such a big deal about in the first place, recruiting Atlanta talent to stay in Atlanta. They're as much of a non-factor on legit talent now as they were under Paul Johnson."

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		Rank
Offense	27.7	94
Defense	29.1	74
Margin	-1.4	88
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	41.1%	81
Defense	48.3%	121
Margin	-7.2%	112
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	5.7	78
Defense	6.7	116
Margin	-1.0	107
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	3.7	106
Defense	4.4	92
Margin	-0.7	104
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	1.5	52
Actual	-2	78
Margin	-3.5	101

KEY: **1**-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

0.471

Georgia Tech's defense ranked at the bottom of the FBS in passing explosiveness allowed (0.471 EPA/pass) and 128th in passing efficiency allowed (49.6 percent success rate).

61.7%

61.7 percent of Georgia Tech's defensive drives resulted in a quality possession for opponents, ranking 123rd in the nation. Georgia Tech's 4.84 points per quality possession allowed ranked 98th.

8.24

Georgia Tech faced the seventh-longest average third-down distance in the FBS, 8.24 yards to go. They converted at a rate of 33.6 percent, 117th in the nation.

MIAMI HURRICANES

National Forecast: 20 • ACC Coastal Prediction: 1 • Projected Record: 9-4, 6-2 ACC

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Mario Cristobal
RECORD AT SCHOOL: First Season
CAREER RECORD: 62-60 (10 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Josh Gattis
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Kevin Steele
LOCATION: Coral Gables, FL
STADIUM: Hard Rock Stadium (64,767)

KEY HURRICANES

TYLER VAN DYKE, QB Threw for 2,931 yards, 25 touchdowns and six interceptions while completing 62.3 percent of passes, and also ran for 57 yards and a touchdown in nine starts. His six consecutive games with at least 300 yards and three touchdowns set a program record.

ZION NELSON, LT Has been starting at left tackle since the first game of his freshman season back in 2019. Pro Football Focus ranks him as one of the 10 best returning tackles in the country.

JAMES WILLIAMS, S Had 31 tackles, two interceptions, four passes defended and a half a tackle for a loss in seven starts. At 6'5" and 224 pounds, he's a rare athlete at safety and is already the heart and soul of the defense.

KEY LOSSES

CHARLESTON RAMBO, WR Set Miami single-season records with 79 catches and 1,172 yards and led the team with seven touchdown catches in his lone season with the Canes.

JONATHAN FORD, DT Played in 50 games and made 30 starts across three seasons at Miami, recording 60 tackles, eight tackles for a loss and three sacks as a run-stuffing DT.

BUBBA BOLDEN, S Was a semifinalist for the Jim Thorpe Award and a second-team All-ACC selection in 2020 before an injury limited him to just seven games last season. Still, he had 42 tackles, 3.5 tackles for a loss, one sack and two passes defended.

RISING STAR

Defensive lineman **LEONARD TAYLOR** had 21 tackles, two sacks and one pass defended and was tied for the team lead with 7.5 tackles for a loss despite not starting a single game and playing in only nine. He's the 13th-highest-ranked recruit the Hurricanes have ever signed.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Cyrus Moss, Edge, Las Vegas, NV	★★★★
2	Nyjalik Kelly, DL, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	★★★★
3	Jaleel Skinner, TE, Bradenton, FL	★★★★
4	Trevonte' Citizen, RB, Lake Charles, LA	★★★★
5	Khamauri Rogers, CB, Lexington, MS	★★★★
6	Chris Graves, ATH, Ft. Myers, FL	★★★★
7	Wesley Bissainthe, LB, Miami, FL	★★★★
8	Jacurri Brown, QB, Valdosta, GA	★★★★
9	Markeith Williams, S, Orlando, FL	★★★★
10	Isaiah Horton, WR, Murfreesboro, TN	★★★★
11	Jaden Harris, CB, Atlanta, GA	★★★
12	Ahmad Moten, DL, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	★★★
13	Matthew McCoy, OT, St. Augustine, FL	★★★
14	Anez Cooper, OT, Pleasant Grove, AL	★★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite *junior college transfer

It's a new era for the Miami Hurricanes — again. For the third time since 2016, Miami will have a new head coach. This time, the Hurricanes swear things will be different, and there are reasons to believe they actually might be. New coach Mario Cristobal brings a résumé with multiple conference championships on it and a nearly unparalleled track record as a recruiter. The on-field staff he has put together is loaded with former head coaches like Charlie Strong, and the off-field staff includes Pro Football Hall of Famers Jason Taylor and Ed Reed. Miami also is promising to spend big on facilities upgrades and everything else the school needs to re-enter the arena of big-time college football.

The future could be bright in Coral Gables. The present is a bit more complicated, although expectations are always high in the typically wide-open Coastal Division of the Atlantic Coast Conference.

OFFENSE Tyler Van Dyke was not expecting to play a significant role for the Hurricanes last season. He was content to sit behind D'Eriq King for one more year and then compete with Jake Garcia for the starting quarterback job in 2022.

Instead, he goes into the season as one of the biggest stars in the sport.

When King went down with season-ending shoulder surgery in the first week of the season, Van Dyke and Garcia both got a chance make their case for the job in a game against the FCS Central Connecticut State Blue Devils. Garcia, though, hurt his ankle in the blowout win, and the job was all Van Dyke's.

It meant the quarterback had a leash to work with when he struggled in Miami's first two ACC games. In Game 3, he abruptly transformed into a star, throwing for 325 yards and four touchdowns in an upset of the then-No. 18 NC State Wolfpack.

Van Dyke finished the season with six straight games of at least 316 passing yards and three passing touchdowns, highlighted by a 426-yard performance as he outdueled Heisman Trophy finalist Kenny Pickett to upset the then-No. 17 Pittsburgh Panthers.

The challenge he faces now is keeping up this torrid pace even after the Hurricanes lose a pair of record-setting wide receivers. Charleston Rambo set single-season records for catches and receiving yards in his lone season at Miami, and Mike Harley finished his career as the school's all-time leader in receptions.

The third-year sophomore has to find a new No. 1 receiver. The Hurricanes hope Van Dyke is so good he can thrive no matter who's surrounding him.

All-America candidate Zion Nelson leads a strong offensive line with three returning starters. They'll open holes for running back Jaylan Knighton, the Canes' leading returning rusher (561 yards, eight TDs).

DEFENSE Inexperience was one of the weaknesses of Miami's defense in 2021. It might manifest as a strength in 2022.

TYLER VAN DYKE

Tom DiPace

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Bethune-Cookman
Sept. 10	Southern Miss
Sept. 17	at Texas A&M
Sept. 24	Middle Tennessee
Oct. 8	North Carolina
Oct. 15	at Virginia Tech
Oct. 22	Duke
Oct. 29	at Virginia
Nov. 5	Florida State
Nov. 12	at Georgia Tech
Nov. 19	at Clemson
Nov. 26	Pittsburgh

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 7-5, 5-3 ACC

Sept. 4	vs. Alabama #	L	13-44
Sept. 11	Appalachian State	W	25-23
Sept. 18	Michigan State	L	17-38
Sept. 25	Central Conn. State	W	69-0
Sept. 30	Virginia	L	28-30
Oct. 16	at North Carolina	L	42-45
Oct. 23	NC State	W	31-30
Oct. 30	at Pittsburgh	W	38-34
Nov. 6	Georgia Tech	W	33-30
Nov. 13	at Florida State	L	28-31
Nov. 20	Virginia Tech	W	38-26
Nov. 27	at Duke	W	47-10

#Atlanta

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	ACC	NATIONAL
Scoring	34.1 ppg	5	23
Rushing	127.7 ypg	12	97
Passing	321.2 ypg	3	10
Total	448.8 ypg	5	19

DEFENSE	PER GAME	ACC	NATIONAL
Scoring	28.2 ppg	9	82
Rushing	139.0 ypg	5	44
Passing	250.6 ypg	11	102
Total	389.6 ypg	7	75

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	ACC	NATIONAL
-7	-0.58	12	108

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	27.6	98
Defense	28.3	45
Margin	-0.7	75
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	43.4%	61
Defense	39.8%	42
Margin	+3.6%	48
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	6.3	42
Defense	5.5	48
Margin	+0.8	40
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.8	14
Defense	4.5	97
Margin	+0.3	57
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	-2.9	104
Actual	-6	100
Margin	-3.1	97

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

3.8%

Opponents rushed 3.8 percent more against Miami than the average team. Miami's defense ranked 59th in rushing success rate allowed at 39.3 percent.

0.157

Miami's offense averaged 0.157 EPA/pass all season, 27th in the nation. In Weeks 1-7, the Hurricanes averaged -0.059 EPA/pass, but that jumped to 0.341 EPA/pass in the second half of the season.

-0.019

Miami's defense limited opponents to -0.019 EPA/play on early downs, the 46th-most efficient early-down defense in the nation.

In their season finale, the Hurricanes started two freshman safeties, a freshman cornerback, a freshman linebacker and a redshirt freshman defensive tackle.

With those freshman defensive backs all back, the secondary could be the strength of the defense. Kamren Kinchens and Avantae Williams were more than capable as starters, and fellow safety James Williams, who started seven games as a freshman last year before a late-season injury, has star potential wherever he winds up playing, whether it's in the secondary or maybe even at outside linebacker. Tyrique Stevenson was at times a lockdown cornerback last year before his own late-season injury, and four other corners have starting experience.

The front six, however, is the biggest question mark on the roster, with Miami trying to replace both its starting defensive ends and still looking for answers at linebacker after two underwhelming seasons from the position. Defensive tackle might be a strength, though, with Leonard Taylor — a former five-star recruit, according to the 247Sports Composite — ready to build on a great freshman season after tying for the team lead with 7.5 tackles for loss.

Cristobal is trying to flex his muscle in the transfer portal — he has already added defensive linemen Mitchell Agude, Jacob Lichtenstein and Antonio Moultrie and is hoping to add a linebacker, too — and he'll need to hit on some of those acquisitions if the defense is going to improve significantly.

SPECIALISTS Punter Lou Hedley is back for a third season after garnering All-America recognition back in 2020. He's a known commodity.

At kicker, Andres Borregales is back for Year 2 after going through the typical ups and downs for a freshman specialist. The highs were really high, though: Borregales drilled a 55-yard field goal in a loss to the Michigan State Spartans. After going 17-of-21 on field goals last year, Borregales will need to be just a bit more consistent as a sophomore.

FINAL ANALYSIS The Hurricanes' newfound commitment to spending and Cristobal's promise on the recruiting trail — plus his favored status as a two-time national champion at Miami — mean the coach could have a longer honeymoon period than some other recent hires, but Miami fans are a famously impatient bunch. They might not have to wait long for results. With Van Dyke in the fold, the Hurricanes should contend for the Coastal title.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

WR	7	Xavier Restrepo (So.)	12	Brashard Smith (So.)
WR	15	Jacolby George (So.)	0	Romello Brinson (So.)
WR	**5**	**Key'Shawn Smith (So.)**	8	Frank Ladson Jr. (Jr.)
LT	**60**	**Zion Nelson (Jr.)**	79	Michael McLaughlin (Fr.)
LG	64	Jalen Rivers (Fr.)	66	Ousman Traore (Jr.)
C	**53**	**Jakai Clark (Jr.)**		Jonathan Denis (Fr.)
RG	70	Justice Oluwaseun (Sr.)	77	Logan Sagapolu (Fr.)
RT	**51**	**DJ Scaife Jr. (Sr.)**	74	John Campbell Jr. (Jr.)
TE	**85**	**Will Mallory (Sr.)**	80	Elijah Arroyo (So.)
QB	**9**	**Tyler Van Dyke (So.)**	13	Jake Garcia (Fr.)
RB	**4**	**Jaylan Knighton (So.)**	2	Donald Chaney Jr. (Fr.)

DEFENSE (5)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE		Mitchell Agude (Sr.)	33	Chantz Williams (So.)
DT	**81**	**Jared Harrison-Hunte (So.)**	55	Jacob Lichtenstein (Sr.)
DT	56	Leonard Taylor (So.)	91	Jordan Miller (Jr.)
DE	12	Jahfari Harvey (So.)	95	Thomas Davis (Fr.)
WLB	**17**	**Waynmon Steed Jr. (Sr.)**	4	Keontra Smith (Jr.)
MLB	**11**	**Corey Flagg Jr. (So.)**	41	Chase Smith (So.)
CB	**2**	**Tyrique Stevenson (Jr.)**	28	Marcus Clarke (So.)
CB		Daryl Porter Jr. (So.)	8	DJ Ivey (Sr.)
STAR	**0**	**James Williams (So.)**	3	Gilbert Frierson (Jr.)
S	15	Avantae Williams (So.)	27	Brian Balom (Fr.)
S	24	Kamren Kinchens (So.)	7	Al Blades Jr. (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	30	Andres Borregales (So.)	KR	12	Brashard Smith (So.)
P	94	Lou Hedley (Sr.)	PR	15	Jacolby George (So.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Tyler Van Dyke	**324**	**202**	**2,931**	**25**	**6**
D'Eriq King	122	81	767	3	4
Jake Garcia	**14**	**11**	**147**	**2**	**0**
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Jaylan Knighton	**145**	**561**	**3.9**	**8**	
Cam'Ron Harris	71	409	5.8	5	
Thaddius Franklin Jr.	**23**	**172**	**7.5**	**2**	
Cody Brown	**34**	**139**	**4.1**	**3**	
D'Eriq King	40	96	2.4	0	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Charleston Rambo	79	1,172	14.8	7	
Mike Harley	57	543	9.5	5	
Key'Shawn Smith	**33**	**405**	**12.3**	**3**	
Will Mallory	**30**	**347**	**11.6**	**4**	
Xavier Restrepo	**24**	**373**	**15.5**	**2**	

KICKING: **Andres Borregales, 17-21 FGs, 96 pts.**
TACKLES: **Corey Flagg Jr., 60; Waynmon Steed Jr., 54**
SACKS: Zach McCloud, 5.5
INTERCEPTIONS: **James Williams, 2**

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE HURRICANES

Opposing Coaches Size Up Miami

"Obviously, there's a lot of attention here. This move felt like it had nothing to do with football, at least with what Manny Diaz was doing towards the end. Go back and look at the tape; they're really close in the Virginia and UNC games, and if they go the other way, Miami wins 10. … The old staff had finally figured out a plan on offense, and [OC] Rhett Lashlee had it going at the very end. They probably gambled too much on D'Eriq King's health, and that killed them. If they had gone with Tyler Van Dyke from the jump, they'd still be there. That kid is the absolute real deal. He's a future first-rounder, and he's going to be the most talented QB in this league by the end of the '22 season. The receivers around him are solid-to-good, and the back is good. The line is finally decent, so they've got a really solid core to build on. ... The Kevin Steele hire is interesting. I think Mario Cristobal wanted a veteran guy with a lot of SEC evaluation experience who could come in and clean up a lot of the small stuff. And also, hiring Kevin sends a particular kind of message — 'Hey, we're going to go four-down; we're going to go after those kind of playmaker linemen and ends you remember Miami having.' This is not a rebuild, and Mario won't be evaluated like it is. Some big pieces fell into place very late in Diaz's time, and there's a way they can pivot to immediate success."

NORTH CAROLINA TAR HEELS

National Forecast: 47 • ACC Coastal Prediction: 3 • Projected Record: 7-5, 4-4 ACC

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Mack Brown
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 90-63-1 (13 years)
CAREER RECORD: 265-139-1 (33 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Phil Longo
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Gene Chizik
LOCATION: Chapel Hill, NC
STADIUM: Kenan Stadium (50,500)

KEY TAR HEELS

JOSH DOWNS, WR Had at least eight receptions in 11 of 13 games and earned first-team All-ACC honors by setting single-season school records for catches (101) and receiving yards (1,335).

CEDRIC GRAY, LB Started the last 11 games and tied for fourth in the ACC with a team-high 100 tackles, including 5.0 tackles for a loss and 2.5 sacks.

MYLES MURPHY, DT Started all 13 games and earned second-team All-ACC honors with 8.0 tackles for a loss (second on the team) and 4.0 sacks (tied for second on the team).

KEY LOSSES

SAM HOWELL, QB Started three seasons and set school records for career total offense (11,292), passing yards (10,283), total touchdowns (111), passing touchdowns (92) and passing efficiency (164.2).

TY CHANDLER, RB Started all 13 games and earned second-team All-ACC honors by rushing for 1,092 yards (6.0 yards per carry) and 13 touchdowns.

TOMON FOX, OLB Made 47 career starts and finished third in school history with 29.5 career sacks, including a team-high 8.5 sacks last season.

RISING STAR

Offensive lineman **ZACH RICE**, a consensus five-star prospect, is the headliner of another top-15 recruiting class for the Tar Heels. At 6'6" and 315 pounds, Rice has the size, strength, agility and attitude to contend for immediate playing time and eventually become a team leader.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Zach Rice, OT, Lynchburg, VA	★★★★★
2	Travis Shaw, DL, Greensboro, NC	★★★★★
3	Andre Greene Jr., WR, Richmond, VA	★★★★
4	George Pettaway, RB, Suffolk, VA	★★★★
5	Omarion Hampton, RB, Clayton, NC	★★★★
6	Sebastian Cheeks, LB, Evanston, IL	★★★★
7	Tychaun Chapman, WR, Virginia Beach, VA	★★★★
8	Malaki Hamrick, Edge, Shelby, NC	★★★★
9	Tayon Holloway, CB, Virginia Beach, VA	★★★★
10	Beau Atkinson, Edge, Raleigh, NC	★★★★
11	Bryson Jennings, Edge, Midlothian, VA	★★★
12	Marcus Allen, CB, Marietta, GA	★★★
13	Will Hardy, ATH, Norcross, GA	★★★
14	Trevyon Green, OT, Colonial Heights, VA	★★★
15	Deuce Caldwell, LB, Mauldin, SC	★★★
16	Conner Harrell, QB, Alabaster, AL	★★★
17	Justin Kanyuk, OT, Bethlehem, PA	★★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite

The talk of North Carolina as a sleeping giant on the national scene has been prevalent for more than two decades. As Mack Brown enters Year 4 of his second stint at UNC, it's nearing time to put up or shut up. After a disappointing 2021 season, Brown hopes that the latter helps lead to the former. "Instead of sitting here talking about what we're going to do and what we're going to win," he says, "we're going back to setting the standard that we need to do everything right to get there."

The Tar Heels have plenty of corrections to make in 2022. They began last season ranked No. 10 nationally and spoke about the chance to go undefeated, but they finished 6–7. Sacks and penalties came in bunches, with UNC ranking at the bottom of the ACC in both categories. The Tar Heels went 0–6 outside the comforts of Kenan Stadium, wasting the final season of star quarterback Sam Howell.

With Howell gone, UNC faces uncertainty at the sport's most important position. Still, there are reasons for optimism. Gene Chizik, who resurrected UNC's underperforming defense in 2015, returns as defensive coordinator to try to repeat the feat. The Tar Heels also have talent from three consecutive top-15 recruiting classes.

"We're more talented than we've been, but they're young," Brown says. "A lot of times, young players don't play well. For us as a staff, that's our job. We've got to get them to play better."

OFFENSE Drake Maye and Jacolby Criswell will compete for the honor of replacing Howell as the leader of UNC's Air Raid attack. Neither player earned the sole backup spot last season, and the duo split reps in the game that Howell missed. Brown has a history of alternating quarterbacks within the same game when he lacks a clear starter, and that scenario could occur in 2022.

Whoever is throwing the passes will have one of the nation's top targets in Josh Downs, who will line up outside sometimes so that opponents can't constantly bracket him in the slot. Downs is a dynamic threat who broke UNC records for catches and receiving yards last season, but he needs more help. Antoine Green emerged late in 2021 as a threat on the outside, but the rest of the group is unproven. UNC has strong potential at tight end with Kamari Morales and 6'6" Bryson Nesbit.

The Tar Heels are loaded at running back with at least six capable players. However, only three will fit into the rotation. British Brooks rushed for 285 yards in UNC's final three games last season, and freshman George Pettaway has star potential. Up front, UNC must replace three starters from an offensive line that struggled in pass protection. This year's unit will feature several seniors and graduate students who have unremarkable credentials but can play multiple positions.

DEFENSE Defense was supposed to be a strength for the Tar Heels in 2021, but the reality never matched the potential. As a result, Brown replaced defensive co-

JOSH DOWNS

North Carolina Athletics

2022 SCHEDULE

Aug. 27	Florida A&M
Sept. 3	at Appalachian State
Sept. 10	at Georgia State
Sept. 24	Notre Dame
Oct. 1	Virginia Tech
Oct. 8	at Miami (Fla.)
Oct. 15	at Duke
Oct. 29	Pittsburgh
Nov. 5	at Virginia
Nov. 12	at Wake Forest
Nov. 19	Georgia Tech
Nov. 25	NC State

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 6-7, 3-5 ACC

Sept. 3	at Virginia Tech	L	10-17
Sept. 11	Georgia State	W	59-17
Sept. 18	Virginia	W	59-39
Sept. 25	at Georgia Tech	L	22-45
Oct. 2	Duke	W	38-7
Oct. 9	Florida State	L	25-35
Oct. 16	Miami (Fla.)	W	45-42
Oct. 30	at Notre Dame	L	34-44
Nov. 6	Wake Forest	W	58-55
Nov. 11	at Pittsburgh (ot)	L	23-30
Nov. 20	Wofford	W	34-14
Nov. 26	at NC State	L	30-34
Dec. 30	vs. South Carolina #	L	21-38

#Duke's Mayo Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	ACC	NATIONAL
Scoring	35.2 ppg	3	19
Rushing	212.6 ypg	2	18
Passing	255.7 ypg	6	42
Total	468.3 ypg	3	10

DEFENSE	PER GAME	ACC	NATIONAL
Scoring	32.1 ppg	12	105
Rushing	180.0 ypg	10	97
Passing	238.0 ypg	8	84
Total	418.0 ypg	11	94

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	ACC	NATIONAL
+2	+0.15	4	53

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	29.3	57
Defense	30.3	99
Margin	-1.0	82
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	46.4%	30
Defense	45.5%	100
Margin	+0.9%	66
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	6.9	8
Defense	6.2	106
Margin	+0.7	49
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.9	11
Defense	4.5	103
Margin	+0.4	53
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	0.7	58
Actual	1	57
Margin	+0.3	60

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

73

Even during a disappointing season, the Tar Heels had an explosive offensive attack. North Carolina had 73 plays of 20-plus yards, sixth most in the FBS. The Tar Heels averaged 14.6 yards per successful play.

55.7%

Opponents generated quality possessions on 55.7 percent of drives, ranking the North Carolina defense 108th overall.

0.181

The North Carolina rush offense ranked eighth in the nation in rushing explosiveness at 0.181 EPA/play and 17th in efficiency at a 45.8 percent success rate.

ordinator Jay Bateman with Chizik. Among Chizik's goals is to force more turnovers, an area that has been problematic in recent years.

UNC has stockpiled young talent on the defensive line, and that talent must start producing. Myles Murphy has breakout potential at tackle, and Raymond Vohasek should return to form as a run stuffer after an injury-plagued 2021. UNC will rotate a plethora of pass rushers, including Virginia transfer Noah Taylor, Chris Collins and Desmond Evans, all of whom are taller than 6'4".

At linebacker, Cedric Gray is one of the few North Carolina players who exceeded expectations in 2021. He began the season in a reserve role and ended the year as the team's top tackler. Gray leads a group that features talented sophomores Power Echols and Rara Dillworth.

UNC needs a resurgent season from its secondary, which was a disappointment a year ago. Cornerbacks Tony Grimes and Storm Duck must lead the charge. Grimes, who appeared bound for stardom as 2020 ended, was merely ordinary and had no interceptions in 2021. Duck, meanwhile, struggled with injuries for the second year in a row and also had no interceptions. When healthy, the duo should be among the best in the league. Safety Ja'Qurious Conley, a versatile playmaker who oozes athleticism, is recovering from a torn ACL and MCL.

SPECIALISTS UNC is looking for more consistency on special teams. The Tar Heels blocked five kicks last season, but they have not returned a kick for a touchdown since 2018. They also ranked last or next to last in the league in net kickoff yardage, net punting and kickoff returns in 2021. Jonathan Kim, whose big leg has been an asset on kickoffs, will now get a chance on field goals and extra points. Downs is a dangerous punt returner.

FINAL ANALYSIS Brown is a Hall of Famer, but UNC did not look like a well-coached team in 2021. Brown spent the offseason trying to solve UNC's poor red zone play and sacks on offense, blown assignments on defense and penalties everywhere. His level of success in those areas will determine how far his team can go. The ACC's Coastal Division, as usual, is up for grabs. The Tar Heels can contend if they get competent QB play and if their defense takes the step forward this season it was supposed to last year.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (4)

WR	**3**	**Antoine Green (Sr.)**	5	J.J. Jones (So.)
WR	**11**	**Josh Downs (Jr.)**		Tychaun Chapman (Fr.)
WR	83	Justin Olson (Jr.)	2	Gavin Blackwell (Fr.)
LT	**72**	**Asim Richards (Sr.)**	57	Cayden Baker (So.)
LG	63	Ed Montilus (Sr.)	64	Malik McGowan (So.)
C	65	Corey Gaynor (Sr.)	68	Brian Anderson (Sr.)
RG	**69**	**Quiron Johnson (Sr.)**	52	Jonathan Adorno (Jr.)
RT	76	William Barnes (Sr.)	55	Zach Rice (Fr.)
TE	88	Kamari Morales (Jr.)	18	Bryson Nesbit (So.)
QB	10	Drake Maye (Fr.)	6	Jacolby Criswell (So.)
RB	24	British Brooks (Sr.)	23	George Pettaway (Fr.)

DEFENSE (7)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	**25**	**Kaimon Rucker (Jr.)**	10	Desmond Evans (Jr.)
NT	**51**	**Raymond Vohasek (Sr.)**	4	Travis Shaw (Fr.)
DT	**8**	**Myles Murphy (Jr.)**	5	Jahvaree Ritzie (So.)
JACK	7	Noah Taylor (Sr.)	17	Chris Collins (Sr.)
LB	23	Power Echols (So.)	32	Sebastian Cheeks (Fr.)
LB	**33**	**Cedric Gray (Jr.)**	11	Rara Dillworth (So.)
CB	29	Storm Duck (Jr.)	14	Dontae Balfour (Fr.)
CB	**1**	**Tony Grimes (Jr.)**	28	Tymir Brown (Fr.)
NB	16	DeAndre Boykins (So.)	13	Obi Egbuna (Sr.)
FS	**9**	**Cam'Ron Kelly (Sr.)**	2	Don Chapman (Sr.)
SS	**0**	**Ja'Qurious Conley (Jr.)**	27	Giovanni Biggers (Sr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	95	Jonathan Kim (Sr.)	**KR**	23	George Pettaway (Fr.)
P	91	Ben Kiernan (Sr.)	**PR**	11	Josh Downs (Jr.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	**ATT**	**COMP**	**YDS**	**TD**	**INT**
Sam Howell	347	217	3,056	24	9
Jacolby Criswell	**21**	**13**	**179**	**1**	**0**
Drake Maye	**10**	**7**	**89**	**1**	**0**
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Ty Chandler	182	1,092	6.0	13	
Sam Howell	183	828	4.5	11	
British Brooks	**31**	**295**	**9.5**	**4**	
D.J. Jones	**60**	**253**	**4.2**	**0**	
Caleb Hood	**22**	**97**	**4.4**	**1**	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Josh Downs	**101**	**1,335**	**13.2**	**8**	
Antoine Green	**31**	**612**	**19.7**	**5**	
Kamari Morales	**24**	**220**	**9.2**	**5**	
Garrett Walston	18	184	10.2	2	
Ty Chandler	15	216	14.4	1	

KICKING: Grayson Atkins, 19-23 FGs, 109 pts.
TACKLES: **Cedric Gray, 100;** Jeremiah Gemmel, 75
SACKS: Tomon Fox, 8.5
INTERCEPTIONS: **Cam'Ron Kelly, 4**

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE TAR HEELS

Opposing Coaches Size Up North Carolina

"Everything about this program changed last season. Now it feels like we're looking at them differently. OK, you weren't a top-10 team, but your head coach had everyone pumped up to believe that. Was he doing the hard sell, or did he believe it too? And if he did, that's scary, because the problems were easy to spot. … They put everything on Sam [Howell] coming back, and it didn't happen. Now they're down an NFL QB, they've lost three NFL running backs in three years, they're turning over the line and basically they've got a few pieces at receiver. It could get ugly fast. … Defensively, [Gene] Chizik is getting a lot more talent than the offense has. That core already took all their bumps; they're good up front, the DL is probably their most talented unit now and they should play better as an overall defense. Chizik will want to simplify everything and attack a lot. … What is the long-term plan here? It's something recruits ask other coaching staffs, so they have to figure it out soon. Is Chizik taking over? You get the feeling that Mack Brown thought Howell and that offense had them in position to win the league with Clemson down, and when it fell apart, no one knew how to handle what came next."

PITTSBURGH PANTHERS

National Forecast: 22 • ACC Coastal Prediction: 2 • Projected Record: 9-3, 6-2 ACC

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Pat Narduzzi
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 53-37 (7 years)
CAREER RECORD: 53-37 (7 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Frank Cignetti Jr.
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Randy Bates
LOCATION: Pittsburgh, PA
STADIUM: Heinz Field (68,400)

KEY PANTHERS

JORDAN ADDISON, WR Reigning Biletnikoff Award winner had a Pittsburgh-record 100 receptions for 1,593 yards and an FBS-best 17 TDs. He's projected as a first-round pick in the 2023 NFL Draft.

CALIJAH KANCEY, DT Third-team AP All-American paced Pittsburgh with 13 TFLs and ranked second with seven sacks. Despite standing just 6'0", the junior from Miami appears unblockable in bursts.

SIRVOCEA DENNIS, LB Second-team All-ACC selection led Pittsburgh with 87 tackles, adding 9.5 TFLs, four sacks and a blocked field goal. In Pittsburgh's upset of Clemson, the senior middle linebacker returned a shovel pass 50 yards for a touchdown.

KEY LOSSES

KENNY PICKETT, QB Heisman finalist rewrote the Pittsburgh record books, passing for 4,319 yards with 42 TDs and only seven interceptions in 2021. He completed passes at a 67.2 percent clip last season.

CAM BRIGHT, LB The Panthers' defensive captain transferred to the University of Washington after collecting 58 tackles, six TFLs and 3.5 sacks.

LUCAS KRULL, TE Krull was an All-ACC second-team pick who had 38 catches for 451 yards with six TDs.

RISING STAR

Outside linebacker **BANGALLY KAMARA** moves into a prominent role for the first time in his Pittsburgh career, rising to a starting position on the post-spring depth chart. As a sophomore, he finished with 11 tackles, two sacks and a forced fumble. After a solid effort in the Panthers' Peach Bowl loss to Michigan State, (three tackles), Kamara stood out during spring drills and was named the team's most improved defensive player.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Ryan Baer, OT, Eastlake, OH	★★★★
2	Jimmy Scott, DL, Hamburg, NY	★★★
3	Samuel Okunlola, DL, Braintree, MA	★★★
4	Ryland Gandy, CB, Buford, GA	★★★
5	Che Nwabuko, WR, Manor, TX	★★★
6	Jordaan Bailey, RB, Tampa, FL	★★★
7	Sean FitzSimmons, DL, Monaca, PA	★★★
8	Isaiah Montgomery, OT, Virginia Beach, VA	★★★
9	Marquan Pope, LB, Denton, TX	★★★
10	Kyle Louis, ATH, East Orange, NJ	★★★
11	Addison Copeland II, WR, Buffalo, NY	★★★
12	Sam Vander Haar, P, Melbourne, Aus	★★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite

As feel-good stories go, few rivaled that of the 2021 Pittsburgh Panthers. Their leap to ACC champions featured a Heisman Trophy chase, a Biletnikoff Award for wideout Jordan Addison and the most victories for the program in 40 years.

Eighth-year coach Pat Narduzzi, awarded a contract extension through the 2030 season, is ready for the next step. "What happened last year? I don't even remember," says Narduzzi, whose program went 11–3, earned a No. 13 ranking and reached its first major bowl game in 17 years. Narduzzi's Panthers look to overcome the departure of Heisman finalist quarterback Kenny Pickett and ride the momentum of a season ago.

OFFENSE USC transfer Kedon Slovis is not expected to match Pickett's 2021 numbers, but he is hardly a novice. This former Pac-12 Freshman of the Year completed 68 percent of his passes for 7,576 yards and 58 TDs in three seasons. His first year was his best, when he threw for 3,502 yards and 30 TDs in leading USC to an 8–5 record. Touted by USC as a Heisman candidate entering 2021, Slovis regressed, throwing for 2,153 yards with 11 TDs and eight interceptions. He entered the transfer portal last December due to a coaching change and the emergence of USC freshman Jaxson Dart (who later transferred to Ole Miss). Narduzzi personally recruited Slovis, who called his selection of Pittsburgh a "no-brainer."

Longtime backup Nick Patti is a worthy challenger. Patti started the 2021 Peach Bowl before suffering a game-ending broken collarbone while diving for a touchdown. Whoever emerges, he must adjust to the departure of offensive coordinator Mark Whipple, who migrated to Nebraska after helping the Panthers rank No. 3 nationally in scoring (41.4 points) and No. 8 in total offense (486.6 yards). Longtime NCAA and NFL coaching vet Frank Cignetti Jr., a run-first devotee, returns to the coordinator role he held in 2009-10.

Reigning Biletnikoff winner Addison (100 receptions, 1,593 yards, FBS-best 17 TDs) created a national firestorm with his decision to enter the transfer portal. If he does move on (the decision was still pending at press time), then Jared Wayne, a 6'3" senior who had 47 receptions, 658 yards and six TDs, will need to step up. Two other pass-catchers to watch: Akron transfer Konata Mumpfield, a Freshman All-American last season with 61 receptions for 751 yards and eight TDs, and sophomore tight end Gavin Bartholomew.

Cignetti will be empowered to run the ball behind a line that returns five starters in tackles Gabe Houy and Carter Warren, guards Jake Kradel and Marcus Minor and center Owen Drexel. The Panthers also return a trio of running backs in junior Israel Abanikanda, senior Vincent Davis and sophomore Rodney Hammond Jr. Bruising Daniel Carter emerged during spring drills.

DEFENSE Six All-ACC selections return to a unit that ranked second nationally in sacks (3.86 per game) and fourth-down defense (26.9 percent). Pittsburgh also

CALIJAH KANCEY

Joe Robbins/Icon Sportswire via Getty Images

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	West Virginia
Sept. 10	Tennessee
Sept. 17	at Western Michigan
Sept. 24	Rhode Island
Oct. 1	Georgia Tech
Oct. 8	Virginia Tech
Oct. 22	at Louisville
Oct. 29	at North Carolina
Nov. 5	Syracuse
Nov. 12	at Virginia
Nov. 19	Duke
Nov. 26	at Miami (Fla.)

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 11-3, 7-1 ACC

Sept. 4	UMass	W	51-7
Sept. 11	at Tennessee	W	41-34
Sept. 18	Western Michigan	L	41-44
Sept. 25	New Hampshire	W	77-7
Oct. 2	at Georgia Tech	W	52-21
Oct. 16	at Virginia Tech	W	28-7
Oct. 23	Clemson	W	27-17
Oct. 30	Miami (Fla.)	L	34-38
Nov. 6	at Duke	W	54-29
Nov. 11	North Carolina (ot)	W	30-23
Nov. 20	Virginia	W	48-38
Nov. 27	at Syracuse	W	31-14
Dec. 4	vs. Wake Forest #	W	45-21
Dec. 30	vs. Michigan State %	L	21-31

#Charlotte, N.C. %Peach Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	ACC	NATIONAL
Scoring	41.4 ppg	1	3
Rushing	149.2 ypg	11	77
Passing	337.4 ypg	2	8
Total	486.6 ypg	2	8

DEFENSE	PER GAME	ACC	NATIONAL
Scoring	23.6 ppg	4	42
Rushing	89.3 ypg	1	6
Passing	264.3 ypg	12	115
Total	353.6 ypg	5	39

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	ACC	NATIONAL
+8	+0.57	2	25

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		Rank
Offense	31.0	22
Defense	28.3	49
Margin	+2.7	27
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	48.0%	19
Defense	39.7%	40
Margin	+8.3%	18
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	6.6	18
Defense	5.1	20
Margin	+1.5	10
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.6	24
Defense	3.9	45
Margin	+0.7	24
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	3.4	20
Actual	8	19
Margin	+4.6	28

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

79

Pittsburgh's offense had 79 plays of 20-plus yards, behind only Ohio State and WKU in all of the FBS.

-0.124

Pittsburgh stopped the run as well as anyone in 2021, holding opponents to a -0.124 EPA/rush, ranking as the eighth-best rushing defense in the nation in that category. The Panthers allowed a successful rush only 35.7 percent of the time.

56.5%

The Panthers generated quality possessions at the 14th-highest rate of any college football team in 2021, 56.5 percent of drives.

ranked fourth in defensive touchdowns (five), sixth in run defense (89.3 yards), eighth in interceptions (16), and 39th in total defense (353.6 yards).

Defensive tackle Calijah Kancey is the anchor. His seven sacks and 13 tackles for a loss earned him first-team All-ACC honors. Senior end and second-team All-ACC pick Habakkuk Baldonado paced Pittsburgh with nine sacks to go with 12 TFLs. Three other key returners — senior end Deslin Alexandre and senior tackles David Green and Devin Danielson — make this group one of the best in FBS.

At linebacker, second-team All-ACC pick SirVocea Dennis returns after posting a team-best 87 tackles along with 9.5 TFLs, four sacks and a blocked field goal. After Dennis, there is uncertainty. Four key 'backers are gone, most notably captain Cam Bright, who transferred to Washington. Notre Dame transfer Shayne Simon is intriguing but unproven (27 career tackles in 31 games). The former four-star recruit played only one game in 2021 due to a shoulder injury. Senior Brandon George (34 tackles, five TFLs), junior Bangally Kamara (two TFLs, forced fumble), and sophomore Solomon DeShields fortify this untested unit.

Pittsburgh's secondary is a mixed bag. While three starters return in safeties Erick Hallett II and Brandon Hill and cornerback Marquis Williams, the numbers were uninspiring. Hallett, who received All-ACC honorable mention recognition, was a bright spot with three interceptions, nine pass breakups and two forced fumbles. The other corner spot could be manned by M.J. Devonshire and/or A.J. Woods.

SPECIALISTS Junior kicker Sam Scarton was named third-team All-ACC after converting 17-of-21 field goal attempts. Freshman Sam Vander Haar, a former Australian rules football player, could take over at punter. Addison and Abanikanda led Pittsburgh in punt and kickoff returns, respectively. Abanikanda had a 98-yard TD return.

FINAL ANALYSIS Narduzzi put to rest questions about job security in leading Pittsburgh to its first Top 25 finish in 12 years and its most wins since the Dan Marino era. The key is sustaining this success. It is no secret that Pickett was the most impactful Pittsburgh player in decades. His former teammates, along with Slovis, are tasked with creating their own identity, while proving that 2021 was a harbinger of future success.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)

WR	**3**	**Jordan Addison (Jr.)**	10	Jaylon Barden (Jr.)
WR	5	Jared Wayne (Sr.)	81	Jaden Bradley (So.)
WR	14	Konata Mumpfield (So.)	82	Gavin Thomson (Jr.)
LT	**77**	**Carter Warren (Sr.)**	76	Matt Goncalves (Jr.)
LG	**55**	**Marcus Minor (Sr.)**	68	Blake Zubovic (Sr.)
C	**60**	**Owen Drexel (Sr.)**	58	Terrence Moore (Fr.)
RG	**53**	**Jake Kradel (Sr.)**	50	Jason Collier Jr. (Jr.)
RT	**57**	**Gabe Houy (Sr.)**	78	Branson Taylor (So.)
TE	**86**	**Gavin Bartholomew (So.)**	88	Jake Renda (Fr.)
QB	9	Kedon Slovis (Sr.)	12	Nick Patti (Sr.)
RB	2	Israel Abanikanda (Jr.)	**22**	**Vincent Davis (Sr.)**

DEFENSE (7)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	**87**	**Habakkuk Baldonado (Sr.)**	6	John Morgan III (Sr.)
DT	**8**	**Calijah Kancey (Jr.)**	95	Devin Danielson (Sr.)
DT	2	David Green (Sr.)	92	Tyler Bentley (Sr.)
DE	**5**	**Deslin Alexandre (Sr.)**	50	Dayon Hayes (Jr.)
LB	11	Bangally Kamara (Jr.)	32	Shayne Simon (Sr.)
LB	**7**	**SirVocea Dennis (Sr.)**	30	Brandon George (Sr.)
LB	34	Solomon DeShields (So.)	27	Buddy Mack III (Jr.)
CB	**14**	**Marquis Williams (Sr.)**	25	A.J. Woods (Sr.)
CB	12	M.J. Devonshire (Jr.)	15	Rashad Battle (Jr.)
SS	**9**	**Brandon Hill (Jr.)**	26	Judson Tallandier II (Sr.)
FS	**31**	**Erick Hallett II (Sr.)**	3	Khalil Anderson (Fr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	91	Sam Scarton (Jr.)	**KR**	2	Israel Abanikanda (Jr.)
P	94	Sam Vander Haar (Fr.)	**PR**	3	Jordan Addison (Jr.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Kenny Pickett	497	334	4,319	42	7
Davis Beville	22	17	207	1	1
Nick Patti	**19**	**14**	**161**	**0**	**0**
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Israel Abanikanda	**123**	**651**	**5.3**	**7**	
Vincent Davis	**142**	**593**	**4.2**	**4**	
Rodney Hammond Jr.	**102**	**504**	**4.9**	**5**	
Kenny Pickett	97	241	2.5	5	
Shocky Jacques-Louis	9	32	3.6	0	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Jordan Addison	**100**	**1,593**	**15.9**	**17**	
Jared Wayne	**47**	**658**	**14.0**	**6**	
Lucas Krull	38	451	11.9	6	
Gavin Bartholomew	**28**	**326**	**11.6**	**4**	
Taysir Mack	27	461	17.1	3	

KICKING: **Sam Scarton, 17-21 FGs, 120 pts.**
TACKLES: **SirVocea Dennis, 87; Brandon Hill, 81**
SACKS: **Habakkuk Baldonado, 9.0**
INTERCEPTIONS: **Erick Hallett II, 3;** John Petrishen, 3

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE PANTHERS

Opposing Coaches Size Up Pittsburgh

"The obvious thing is that losing Kenny Pickett is going to hurt them a lot. That's not the caliber of quarterback you turn around and replace at a program like that. But the under-the-radar thing, at least to a lot of us, is losing [OC Mark] Whipple. It was no secret he didn't really jibe with Pat [Narduzzi], but that's not a bad thing all the time. I think he was the first offensive coach to come in there and really push back and call his own shots, and it really worked. They had a talented QB and they could attack defenses really well. … The interesting thing will be Kedon Slovis. He's a different style player than Kenny. I think [new OC] Frank Cignetti Jr. is going to bring that Boston College offense over and try to play a little bit more ball control, but they need to run the ball better. … The defense is going to be what you're used to at this point. They play like Pat wants; they match his personality. This is a tough team. They embrace physicality. They're Pat, for better or worse: maul you or get too aggressive and go to zero coverage and get torched. They're not really deep, either, and they lack high-end talent. … The floor for this program is floating around a bowl. No one really knows what the expectation for this staff is now. Did Pat earn a little security? He's certainly no charmer. They're almost certainly going to fall back into the pack this year."

VIRGINIA CAVALIERS

National Forecast: 68 • ACC Coastal Prediction: 5 • Projected Record: 5-7, 2-6 ACC

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Tony Elliott
RECORD AT SCHOOL: First Season
CAREER RECORD: First Season
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Des Kitchings
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: John Rudzinski
LOCATION: Charlottesville, VA
STADIUM: Scott Stadium (61,500)

KEY CAVALIERS

BRENNAN ARMSTRONG, QB The record-setting lefty decided to return to college for his senior season, giving UVA's offense instant credibility and capability.

DONTAYVION WICKS, WR Wicks emerged as the team's go-to deep threat last season, averaging 21.1 yards on his 57 receptions and leading the Cavaliers with nine touchdown receptions.

NICK JACKSON, LB From his inside 'backer spot, Jackson has been the heart of the Virginia defense for the past two years, recording more than 100 tackles each season.

KEY LOSSES

JELANI WOODS, TE The 6'7" Oklahoma State transfer tight end brought another dimension to Virginia's explosive passing game, scoring eight receiving touchdowns.

OLUSEGUN OLUWATIMI, C All five starters from Virginia's offensive line are gone, none more important than the center who transferred to Michigan.

NOAH TAYLOR, OLB Taylor, despite battling injuries, emerged as a disruptive edge rusher for the Cavaliers, leading the team in tackles for a loss before transferring to North Carolina.

RISING STAR

In 2020, **LAVEL DAVIS JR.** put himself on the map as UVA's deep-threat receiving option. The 6'7", 224-pound South Carolina native caught 20 passes for 515 yards and five touchdowns. He led the ACC — and ranked second in the nation — in averaging 25.8 yards per reception. He's back after missing last season with a torn ACL and figures to be another weapon in UVA's deep arsenal of receiving threats.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Dakota Twitty, WR, Mooresboro, NC	★★★★
2	Karson Gay, TE, Chattanooga, TN	★★★
3	Snoop Amaama, OL, Lehi, UT	★★★
4	Xavier Brown, RB, Lexington, KY	★★★
5	Stevie Bracey, LB, Atlanta, GA	★★★
6	Davis Lane Jr., QB, Lynchburg, VA	★★★
7	Sean Wilson, WR, Brooklyn, NY	★★★
8	Mckale Boley, OT, Hattiesburg, MS	★★★
9	Trey McDonald, LB, Chattanooga, TN	★★★
10	Terrell Jones, DL, Hoover, AL	★★★
11	Houston Curry, OT, Simpsonville, SC	★★★
12	Delaney Crawford, QB, Corona, CA	★★★
13	Noah DeMeritt, OL, Kingsland, GA	★★★
14	Dawson Alters, OL, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	★★★
15	Will Bettridge, K, Miami, FL	★★★
16	Blake Steen, OT, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	n/r

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite

Virginia wasn't anticipating a change in leadership following a 6–6 season, but in between the team losing its regular-season finale to Virginia Tech and having its appearance in the Fenway Bowl canceled due to a COVID-19 outbreak, head coach Bronco Mendenhall decided to retire — for the moment, at least — from college football.

Enter Tony Elliott, the former Clemson offensive coordinator and the man now tasked with keeping the proverbial ball rolling for the Cavaliers, whom Mendenhall led to an ACC Coastal title in 2019 at the height of his tenure. Elliott inherits a roster rich with offensive talent in the passing game but bereft of experience on the offensive line. It's a unit that never truly established a traditional running game in any of the past four seasons.

Defensively, UVA returns five starters from a unit that has had a propensity to give up big plays each of the past two years.

The Elliott era kicks off Sept. 3, at home against FCS Richmond, the same in-state opponent that handed Mendenhall a loss in his Virginia debut. This new staff inherits a program in much better shape than the one Mendenhall took over in 2016. And the expectation is that Elliott — who has talked about building "the model college football program" — will be better equipped to hit the ground running.

OFFENSE Virginia brings back most of the firepower from its record-setting offense, including quarterback Brennan Armstrong and top wide receivers Dontayvion Wicks, Keytaon Thompson and Billy Kemp IV. Plus, UVA will get 2020 breakout star Lavel Davis Jr. back after he missed last season with a torn ACL.

Those skill positions are loaded for Elliott's first season, but the offensive line is a major question mark that could derail the entire product. Virginia must replace all five of its starters up front with no obvious candidates. Senior Derek Devine, who worked at both guard and tackle in the spring, is the program's most experienced returner. UVA went into the transfer portal for right tackle Mac Hollensteiner (Georgetown) and left tackle John Paul Flores (Dartmouth).

Elliott has talked extensively about bringing more balance to the offense and developing UVA's lagging traditional run game, but a spring injury to Ronnie Walker Jr. combined with the lack of experience and depth up front may have derailed that progress.

In the end, Armstrong's running ability may have as much to do with the offense's success as his pro-caliber arm.

DEFENSE The Cavaliers have struggled on defense of late, and some top playmakers — including defensive end Mandy Alonso, linebacker Noah Taylor, cornerback Nick Grant and safety Joey Blount — are gone.

UVA plans to be multiple schematically under new coordinator John Rudzinski, so both three- and four-man fronts are in the plans. The Cavaliers used mostly a five-defensive-back look in the spring.

BRENNAN ARMSTRONG

Virginia Athletics

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Richmond
Sept. 10	at Illinois
Sept. 17	Old Dominion
Sept. 23	at Syracuse
Oct. 1	at Duke
Oct. 8	Louisville
Oct. 20	at Georgia Tech
Oct. 29	Miami (Fla.)
Nov. 5	North Carolina
Nov. 12	Pittsburgh
Nov. 19	Coastal Carolina
Nov. 26	at Virginia Tech

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 6-6, 4-4 ACC

Sept. 4	William & Mary	W	43-0
Sept. 11	Illinois	W	42-14
Sept. 18	at North Carolina	L	39-59
Sept. 24	Wake Forest	L	17-37
Sept. 30	at Miami (Fla.)	W	30-28
Oct. 9	at Louisville	W	34-33
Oct. 16	Duke	W	48-0
Oct. 23	Georgia Tech	W	48-40
Oct. 30	at BYU	L	49-66
Nov. 13	Notre Dame	L	3-28
Nov. 20	at Pittsburgh	L	38-48
Nov. 27	Virginia Tech	L	24-29

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	ACC	NATIONAL
Scoring	34.6 ppg	4	21
Rushing	123.2 ypg	14	105
Passing	392.6 ypg	1	2
Total	515.8 ypg	1	3
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**ACC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	31.8 ppg	11	104
Rushing	225.8 ypg	14	123
Passing	240.2 ypg	9	87
Total	466.0 ypg	13	121
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**ACC**	**NATIONAL**
-3	-0.25	11	87

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		Rank
Offense	25.4	126
Defense	28.1	42
Margin	-2.7	101
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	50.4%	7
Defense	47.5%	115
Margin	+2.9%	52
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	7.0	6
Defense	6.7	117
Margin	+0.3	68
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.5	38
Defense	4.1	70
Margin	+0.4	58
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	-5.8	126
Actual	-4	90
Margin	+1.8	49

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

48.1%

Virginia's offense ranked fourth in passing efficiency with a 48.1 percent success rate in 2021, all the more impressive considering the high-volume attack; the Cavaliers passed more often than all but two FBS teams.

0.211

Virginia's defense ranked 126th in run-stopping, allowing 0.211 EPA/play and a 46.4 percent success rate to opponents.

75

Virginia had 75 plays of 20-plus yards in 2021, fourth most in the country. The Cavs generated a quality possession on 59.8 percent of drives, eighth in the country.

Inside linebacker Nick Jackson led the team with 117 tackles last season. A big question will be where Virginia derives its pass rush. Of the Cavaliers' 19 sacks last season, 12 came from players who are no longer with the team. Georgia Tech transfer Chico Bennett Jr., who missed last season with a knee injury, and sophomore outside linebacker Mike Green are two players who could have an impact in that area.

In the defensive backfield, former Louisville transfer Anthony Johnson returns at cornerback to lead a unit that allowed 21 pass plays of 30 yards or more, the fifth most in the ACC.

SPECIALISTS UVA asked a lot of Brendan Farrell last season. After working mostly as a punter and opening the season without a starting job, he ended up placekicking and kicking off for most of the year. With Jacob Finn and his 44.2-yard per punt average gone, Farrell may get a look there, too. Freshman kicker Will Bettridge figures to challenge Farrell for the extra point and field goal work.

Kemp figures to be the team's primary punt returner again. Kemp and running back Mike Hollins split kick return duties last season, but UVA would like to get more pop from that spot this year.

FINAL ANALYSIS The ACC Coastal Division looks to be, once again, pretty open for the taking, but in Elliott's first season, UVA may be a few pieces short of being able to take advantage of that. The Cavaliers should offer up plenty of highlights in the passing game, with Armstrong, Wicks and Davis emerging as true stars. But a lack of experience on the offensive line, no established running back and a defense that still has to prove it won't get torched for big gains may be too much to overcome.

The schedule is a mixed bag. Playing at Illinois in Week 2 will be an early test, and Old Dominion and Coastal Carolina are both capable Division I opponents. A tough three-game stretch from late October to mid-November, when UVA faces division foes Miami, North Carolina and Pittsburgh in consecutive weeks, figures to be the defining test of the season. The good news? All three of those games are at home.

If Virginia can find a way to protect Armstrong and cut down on giving up big plays, the Cavaliers could surprise people in Elliott's first season. If not, he may be struggling to outdo his predecessor's 2–10 debut six seasons ago.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (4)

WR	**99**	**Keytaon Thompson (Sr.)**	**4**	**Billy Kemp IV (Sr.)**
WR	1	Lavel Davis Jr. (Jr.)	8	Malachi Fields (So.)
WR	**3**	**Dontayvion Wicks (Jr.)**	15	Devin Chandler (Jr.)
LT		John Paul Flores (Sr.)	68	Logan Taylor (So.)
LG	77	Noah Josey (So.)	69	Luke Johnson (So.)
C	51	Ty Furnish (So.)	78	Jestus Johnson III (So.)
RG	67	Derek Devine (Sr.)	51	Ty Furnish (So.)
RT		Mac Hollensteiner (Sr.)	65	Jonathan Leech (Jr.)
TE	85	Grant Misch (Sr.)	89	Joshua Rawlings (So.)
QB	**5**	**Brennan Armstrong (Sr.)**	16	Jay Woolfolk (So.)
RB	32	Ronnie Walker Jr. (Sr.)	7	Mike Hollins (Jr.)

DEFENSE (5)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	94	Aaron Faumui (Sr.)	91	Jack Camper (Sr.)
NT	**90**	**Jahmeer Carter (Jr.)**	88	Lorenz Terry (So.)
DE	19	Olasunkonmi Agunloye (So.)	10	Ben Smiley III (Jr.)
OLB	15	Chico Bennett Jr. (Sr.)		Kam Butler (Sr.)
ILB	**6**	**Nick Jackson (Sr.)**	13	Hunter Stewart (Jr.)
OLB	4	Mike Green (So.)		Andres Fox (Sr.)
CB	**8**	**Darrius Bratton (Sr.)**	23	Fentrell Cypress II (Jr.)
CB	**3**	**Anthony Johnson (Sr.)**	22	Elijah Gaines (So.)
NB	27	Langston Long (So.)	21	Javin Burke (So.)
S	0	Antonio Clary (Sr.)	27	Langston Long (So.)
S	**9**	**Coen King (Sr.)**	20	Jonas Sanker (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K		Will Bettridge (Fr.)	**KR**	7	Mike Hollins (Jr.)
P	40	Brendan Farrell (Jr.)	**PR**	4	Billy Kemp IV (Sr.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Brennan Armstrong	**500**	**326**	**4,449**	**31**	**10**
Jay Woolfolk	**41**	**22**	**245**	**0**	**2**

Rushing	ATT	YDS	AVG	TD
Wayne Taulapapa	62	324	5.2	2
Brennan Armstrong	**98**	**251**	**2.6**	**9**
Keytaon Thompson	**39**	**247**	**6.3**	**4**
Devin Darrington	32	237	7.4	2
Mike Hollins	**49**	**213**	**4.3**	**2**

Receiving	REC	YDS	AVG	TD
Keytaon Thompson	**78**	**990**	**12.7**	**1**
Billy Kemp IV	**74**	**725**	**9.8**	**6**
Dontayvion Wicks	**57**	**1,203**	**21.1**	**9**
Jelani Woods	44	598	13.6	8
Ra'Shaun Henry	34	603	17.7	3

KICKING: **Brendan Farrell, 11-13 FGs, 67 pts.**
TACKLES: **Nick Jackson, 117;** Joey Blount, 87
SACKS: Mandy Alonso, 3.5; Noah Taylor, 3.5
INTERCEPTIONS: Joey Blount, 3; **Anthony Johnson, 3**

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE CAVALIERS

Opposing Coaches Size Up Virginia

"This is a very hard situation to get a bead on. Tony [Elliott] is a really sharp guy and a good coach. It seems like he interviewed for so many head jobs over the years, and he lands on this one? That's either crazy smart or crazy. We'll find out. … They lost most of the offensive line in the portal, and that was maybe their strongest position group. The last staff did a pretty good job of shopping the portal; both of their really good tight ends came from there. I'm not sure how Tony plans to use that. … They had a nice plan going with their defense, and it ended up biting them in the end, switching from what they had to that 3-3 stuff. I think they were trying a lot of stuff from Iowa State. … Bottom line was, Bronco [Mendenhall] didn't want to make concessions with his staff, and that's why he's gone. The move to get Tony makes sense on the Virginia side. They're going to shift in the direction of chasing talent a bit more, but at a place like UVA, you're not going to beat Clemson or FSU and out-talent teams. You have to develop. That's going to make or break this staff. … They're going to graduate a lot of the players that didn't transfer out, so they need to be able to get a lot out of a core of Bronco's guys right away before it gets really thin the next season."

VIRGINIA TECH HOKIES

National Forecast: 66 • ACC Coastal Prediction: 4 • Projected Record: 6-6, 3-5 ACC

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Brent Pry
RECORD AT SCHOOL: First Season
CAREER RECORD: First Season
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tyler Bowen
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Chris Marve
LOCATION: Blacksburg, VA
STADIUM: Lane Stadium (65,632)

KEY HOKIES

DAX HOLLIFIELD, LB Brent Pry is known for his work with LBs, and Hollifield is a multi-year starter whose 92 tackles last year led the team.

JADAN BLUE, WR Blue will work out of the slot, hoping to get back to his 2019 numbers, when he caught 95 passes for 1,067 yards at Temple.

CHAMARRI CONNER, S He moved from nickel to the field safety, where the Hokies hope his speed and aggressiveness will play better than they do close to the line.

KEY LOSSES

AMARÉ BARNO, DE Though he couldn't duplicate his breakout 2020 numbers, he was still an athletic freak on the edge.

TRÉ TURNER, WR Big Play Tré finished his college career fifth on Virginia Tech's all-time list in both receptions (134) and yards (2,292).

LECITUS SMITH, LG A mainstay on the left side of the line, Smith was a road-grader who started 38 games in his career.

RISING STAR

With Tech's receiving options limited last year, **DA'WAIN LOFTON** showed a little bit of what he could do at the tail end of his freshman season, catching seven passes for 98 yards and a touchdown. He should start in 2022, giving the Hokies a shifty receiver with good hands on the outside.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Gunner Givens, DL, Daleville, VA	★★★★
2	Cam Johnson, CB, Baltimore, MD	★★★★
3	Benji Gosnell, TE, Hillsville, VA	★★★★
4	Johnny Dickson, OL, Corpus Christi, TX	★★★
5	Brody Meadows, OT, Bluefield, VA	★★★
6	Daequan Wright, TE, Perry, GA	★★★
7	Mansoor Delane, CB, Severn, MD	★★★
8	Rashaud Pernell, DL, Highland Springs, VA	★★★
9	Braelin Moore, OL, Bethlehem, PA	★★★
10	Devin Farrell, QB, Alpharetta, GA	★★★
11	Xavier Chaplin, OT, Seabrook, SC	★★★
12	Kyree Moyston, DL, Suffolk, VA	★★★
13	Devin Alves, ATH, Melbourne, FL	★★★
14	Xayvion Turner-Bradshaw, ATH, Bluefield, VA	★★★
15	Tucker Holloway, WR, Rabun Gap, GA	★★★
16	Keyshawn Burgos, Edge, Chesterfield, VA	★★★
17	Bryce Duke, RB, Leesburg, VA	★★★
18	Harrison Saint Germain, TE, Chantilly, VA	★★★
19	Lemar Law Jr., DL, Virginia Beach, VA	★★★
20	Malachi Madison, DL, Chester, VA	★★★
21	Johnny Garrett, OT, Boston, MA	★★★
22	Hunter Mclain, OL, Daleville, VA	★★★
23	Reid Pulliam, LB, Colonial Heights, VA	★★★
24	John Love, K, Spartanburg, SC	★★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite

In looking to the future, Virginia Tech turned to its past, hiring Penn State defensive coordinator Brent Pry, a one-time graduate assistant during the Hokies' heyday in the mid-'90s under Frank Beamer and Bud Foster, to right the ship after six up-and-down years under Justin Fuente.

"I wasn't sure if I'd ever step out and do my own thing," says the 52-year-old Pry, who's spent 30 years as an assistant. "And it took this place to do it."

Pry is in many ways the anti-Fuente, a defensive-minded coach with some Virginia Tech DNA who's been eager to reach out to Hokie Nation, mend fractured relationships and sell his vision, bringing a jolt of enthusiasm to a program that's finished under .500 in three of the last four years.

But those good vibes might have their limits in the short term due to a roster short on talent and depth after some lean recruiting years and a slew of NFL departures.

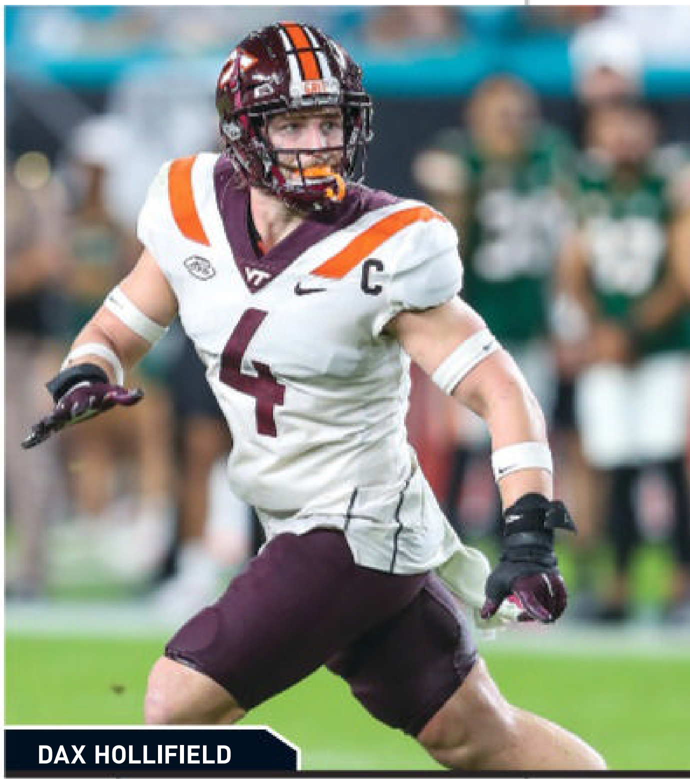
OFFENSE The high-octane offenses promised by Fuente never materialized other than in 2016, with shaky quarterback play, a hit-or-miss ground game and a shortage of playmakers all contributing to his ouster. Pry's offensive vision is decidedly more old school, and he hired offensive line coach Joe Rudolph away from Wisconsin to help achieve it.

The question for 2022 is this: Do the Hokies have the personnel to run that kind of offense? Marshall transfer Grant Wells (5,623 yards, 34 TDs, 22 INTs in two years) is the likely starting quarterback over South Carolina transfer Jason Brown. With a strong arm, Wells is not afraid to push things downfield, something that's been sorely lacking in the offense recently, although he does need to cut down on the interceptions.

A receiving corps led by Temple transfer Jadan Blue, big-but-speedy veteran Kaleb Smith and up-and-comers Da'Wain Lofton and Jaylen Jones, plus tight end Nick Gallo and versatile quarterback-turned-offensive weapon Connor Blumrick, provides a decent foundation for the passing game.

It will be tougher sledding on the ground, though. There's some talent in a bloated running back room, with sophomore Malachi Thomas (440 yards, three TDs) a good bet for a lot of carries. But the offensive line has major question marks. Silas Dzansi and Johnny Jordan return for their sixth years, and sophomores Kaden Moore and Parker Clements are capable young blockers. But there's no experience beyond that, an alarming lack of depth and little evidence that this group will move defenses off the line enough to be a run-first offense this year.

DEFENSE Pry cut his teeth in the profession with Foster's defenses in the '90s and spent the last 11 years as James Franklin's defensive coordinator, fielding a top-25 defense in yards per play in all eight of his seasons with the Nittany Lions. The issue in Year 1 might be finding the right pieces to fit his scheme.



DAX HOLLIFIELD

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	at Old Dominion
Sept. 10	Boston College
Sept. 17	Wofford
Sept. 22	West Virginia
Oct. 1	at North Carolina
Oct. 8	at Pittsburgh
Oct. 15	Miami (Fla.)
Oct. 27	at NC State
Nov. 5	Georgia Tech
Nov. 12	at Duke
Nov. 19	at Liberty
Nov. 26	Virginia

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 6-7, 4-4 ACC

Sept. 3	North Carolina	W	17-10
Sept. 11	Middle Tennessee	W	35-14
Sept. 18	at West Virginia	L	21-27
Sept. 25	Richmond	W	21-10
Oct. 9	Notre Dame	L	29-32
Oct. 16	Pittsburgh	L	7-28
Oct. 23	Syracuse	L	36-41
Oct. 30	at Georgia Tech	W	26-17
Nov. 5	at Boston College	L	3-17
Nov. 13	Duke	W	48-17
Nov. 20	at Miami (Fla.)	L	26-38
Nov. 27	at Virginia	W	29-24
Dec. 29	vs. Maryland #	L	10-54

#Pinstripe Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	ACC	NATIONAL
Scoring	23.7 ppg	13	97
Rushing	184.6 ypg	4	42
Passing	176.4 ypg	13	112
Total	361.0 ypg	12	98
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**ACC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	25.3 ppg	5	54
Rushing	169.2 ypg	8	91
Passing	224.2 ypg	6	63
Total	393.3 ypg	8	78
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**ACC**	**NATIONAL**
+1	+0.08	8	64

Tom DiPace

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	29.6	50
Defense	27.0	21
Margin	+2.6	28
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	40.6%	85
Defense	42.7%	69
Margin	-2.1%	90
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	5.6	84
Defense	6.1	98
Margin	-0.5	95
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	3.7	105
Defense	4.3	78
Margin	-0.6	101
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	2.9	30
Actual	2	52
Margin	-0.9	76

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

33.3%

Virginia Tech's passing offense succeeded on just 33.3 percent of plays, ranking the Hokies 114th in passing efficiency. Tech averaged only 176.4 yards per game through the air.

4.04

The Hokies gained a quality possession on 43.2 percent of drives but scored only 4.04 points per quality possession.

0.019

Virginia Tech was better than average against the pass. The Hokies allowed 0.019 EPA/pass to opponents (45th in explosiveness) and held them to a 37.6 percent passing success rate (37th).

There's depth and experience at two of the linebacker spots, with Dax Hollifield and Alan Tisdale having combined to start 55 games in their careers. They were the two most disruptive players on last year's defense, combining for 16.5 tackles for a loss. The secondary has a good base, with Chamarri Conner moving back from nickel to play one of the safety spots and an experienced trio of Armani Chatman, Dorian Strong and Brion Murray returning as cover guys.

Like the offense, it's the line that could be a problem. No Hokies defensive lineman had more than 3.5 sacks last year, and while Tech addressed a shortage of linemen with a big 2022 class, don't expect significant contributions from that freshman group this fall. TyJuan Garbutt, Norell Pollard and Mario Kendricks are the veterans on the line, and Nebraska transfer Pheldarius Payne could help once he enrolls, but Tech will need youngsters like Cole Nelson, C.J. McCray, Mattheus Carroll and Wilfried Pene to take a big step forward.

The Hokies also have to find someone for the Sam linebacker position, a hybrid spot that's critical in Pry's defense and needs linebacker and safety qualities. Tech had a carousel of players try it in the spring, with former safeties Keonta Jenkins and J.R. Walker ending up there, along with 6'4" converted receiver Keli Lawson. That spot might typify Tech's defensive outlook in 2022, with Pry mixing and matching to make the most of personnel recruited by the previous staff to a different scheme.

SPECIALISTS It says something about Tech's roster that punter Peter Moore is the only returner who made any of the first three All-ACC teams last year. He averaged 44.5 yards per boot. Star punt returner Tayvion Robinson transferred to Kentucky, although DJ Harvey, Lofton and Blue all have promise in that role. Tech will be breaking in a new kicker for a second straight season.

FINAL ANALYSIS The excitement level is high in Blacksburg after removing the black cloud that hung over the program in the latter half of the Fuente era, but there's no quick fix in sight. This is a roster that needs serious talent upgrades, particularly on the lines. The bottom didn't completely fall out recently (the Hokies still averaged 6.25 wins per season the last four years), and the ACC's Coastal Division isn't exactly a world-beater, but it will take time to turn things around. Getting to six wins and a bowl game would be an accomplishment.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)				
WR	**80**	**Kaleb Smith (Jr.)**	81	Dallan Wright (Fr.)
WR	3	Da'Wain Lofton (So.)	12	Stephen Gosnell (So.)
WR	2	Jadan Blue (Sr.)	88	Jaylen Jones (So.)
LT	**60**	**Silas Dzansi (Sr.)**	59	Chris Boyd (Fr.)
LG	72	Jesse Hanson (So.)	75	Bob Schick (So.)
C	55	Johnny Jordan (Sr.)	53	Nikolai Bujnowski (Fr.)
RG	**68**	**Kaden Moore (So.)**	58	Jack Hollifield (Fr.)
RT	**70**	**Parker Clements (So.)**	74	William Jones (Fr.)
TE	**86**	**Nick Gallo (Jr.)**	89	Drake Deluliis (Sr.)
QB	6	Grant Wells (So.)	1	Jason Brown (Sr.)
RB	24	Malachi Thomas (So.)	0	Jalen Holston (Sr.)
DEFENSE (7)			Returning Starters in **BOLD**	
DE	**45**	**TyJuan Garbutt (Sr.)**	41	Jaylen Griffin (Sr.)
DT	**3**	**Norell Pollard (Jr.)**	91	Wilfried Pene (So.)
DT	22	Mario Kendricks (Jr.)	6	Josh Fuga (So.)
DE	93	Cole Nelson (So.)	56	C.J. McCray (Fr.)
SLB	33	Keonta Jenkins (So.)	19	J.R. Walker (So.)
MLB	**4**	**Dax Hollifield (Sr.)**	15	Keshon Artis (Jr.)
WLB	**34**	**Alan Tisdale (Jr.)**	52	Jaden Keller (Fr.)
CB	**44**	**Dorian Strong (So.)**	20	DJ Harvey (Fr.)
CB	9	Armani Chatman (Jr.)	8	Brion Murray (Sr.)
BS	**5**	**Nasir Peoples (Jr.)**	13	Ny'Quee Hawkins (So.)
FS	**1**	**Chamarri Conner (Sr.)**	26	Jalen Stroman (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	97	John Love (Fr.)	**KR**	23	Keshawn King (Jr.)
P	85	Peter Moore (So.)	**PR**	20	DJ Harvey (Fr.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	**ATT**	**COMP**	**YDS**	**TD**	**INT**
Braxton Burmeister	255	142	1,960	14	4
Connor Blumrick	**31**	**16**	**152**	**2**	**0**
Knox Kadum	24	12	151	0	1
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Raheem Blackshear	133	760	5.7	6	
Braxton Burmeister	117	521	4.5	2	
Malachi Thomas	**93**	**440**	**4.7**	**3**	
Connor Blumrick	**56**	**242**	**4.3**	**3**	
Jalen Holston	**52**	**199**	**3.8**	**1**	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Tayvion Robinson	44	559	12.7	5	
Tré Turner	40	675	16.9	3	
Raheem Blackshear	25	249	10.0	1	
Kaleb Smith	**20**	**260**	**13.0**	**2**	
Nick Gallo	**14**	**130**	**9.3**	**0**	

KICKING: John Parker Romo, 18-22 FGs, 88 pts.
TACKLES: **Dax Hollifield, 92; Nasir Peoples, 88**
SACKS: **Dax Hollifield, 4.5**
INTERCEPTIONS: Jermaine Waller, 4

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE HOKIES

Opposing Coaches Size Up Virginia Tech

"The program did real damage to itself keeping Justin Fuente for that extra year. Maybe even the last two. … I think Brent Pry identifies as a Bud Foster guy and wants to commit long term. Other coaches saw the condition of that roster and figured out pretty quick that they have years of work ahead of them. … It's bleak on offense. Schematically, they were a train wreck in '21. I don't think they have an ACC-caliber QB on the roster. Those guys are average at best. The offensive line was the strength for the offense, and now they're gone. … It's not a stretch to say the offense doesn't have a top-half-of-the-league-level skill player at any position. They haven't signed a single player in the last two years that a high-level ACC program wanted. … I think Pry's plan is to do what [Jeff] Hafley did at Boston College and bring in an NFL guy like [new OC] Tyler Bowen, then run a lot of ball control, two-tight end stuff to try to shorten the game. … Pry is a great DC, except now he's going to have to face the reality he can't focus on this defense the way he has his entire career. It's always interesting to watch a career coordinator in their first head-coaching year and how much they're stuck on acting like their old job. … This is a really solid staff, they're football smart, but you can't just outcoach every team every week in the Power 5. It took Frank Beamer a long time to get it going, and it might take the same amount of time to fix this."

BIG 12 PREVIEW

PREDICTED ORDER OF FINISH

1	BAYLOR **BEARS**	10-3, 6-3
2	OKLAHOMA **SOONERS**	9-4, 6-3
3	OKLAHOMA STATE **COWBOYS**	8-4, 5-4
4	TEXAS **LONGHORNS**	7-5, 5-4
5	KANSAS STATE **WILDCATS**	8-4, 5-4
6	IOWA STATE **CYCLONES**	7-5, 5-4
7	WEST VIRGINIA **MOUNTAINEERS**	7-5, 5-4
8	TCU **HORNED FROGS**	6-6, 3-6
9	TEXAS TECH **RED RAIDERS**	5-7, 3-6
10	KANSAS **JAYHAWKS**	4-8, 2-7

Games to Watch

West Virginia at Pittsburgh, Sept. 1
Alabama at Texas, Sept. 10
Iowa State at Iowa, Sept. 10
Baylor at BYU, Sept. 10
Oklahoma at Nebraska, Sept. 17
Oklahoma State at Baylor, Oct. 1
Oklahoma vs. Texas (Dallas), Oct. 8
Texas at Oklahoma State, Oct. 22
Oklahoma at Iowa State, Oct. 27
Baylor at Oklahoma, Nov. 5
Oklahoma State at Oklahoma, Nov. 19
Baylor at Texas, Nov. 26

DILLON DOYLE

Baylor Athletics

Big 12 Championship:
Baylor over Oklahoma

Recruiting by School

1. Texas
2. Oklahoma
3. Oklahoma State
4. West Virginia
5. Baylor
6. Iowa State
7. Texas Tech
8. TCU
9. Kansas State
10. Kansas

ALL-BIG 12 TEAM

FIRST-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	**Spencer Sanders**	Sr.	Oklahoma State
RB	**Bijan Robinson**	Jr.	Texas
RB	**Deuce Vaughn**	Jr.	Kansas State
WR	**Quentin Johnston**	Jr.	TCU
WR	**Xavier Hutchinson**	Sr.	Iowa State
WR	**Xavier Worthy**	So.	Texas
TE	**Ben Sims**	Sr.	Baylor
C	**Jacob Gall**	Sr.	Baylor
OL	**Connor Galvin**	Sr.	Baylor
OL	**Zach Frazier**	Jr.	West Virginia
OL	**Cooper Beebe**	Jr.	Kansas State
OL	**Trevor Downing**	Sr.	Iowa State

FIRST-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	**Will McDonald IV**	Sr.	Iowa State
DL	**Dante Stills**	Sr.	West Virginia
DL	**Felix Anudike-Uzomah**	Jr.	Kansas State
DL	**Collin Oliver**	So.	Oklahoma State
DL	**Siaki Ika**	Jr.	Baylor
LB	**Dillon Doyle**	Sr.	Baylor
LB	**Daniel Green**	Sr.	Kansas State
LB	**DeMarvion Overshown**	Sr.	Texas
CB	**T. Hodges-Tomlinson**	Sr.	TCU
CB	**Julius Brents**	Sr.	Kansas State
S	**Kenny Logan Jr.**	Sr.	Kansas
S	**Jason Taylor II**	Sr.	Oklahoma State

FIRST-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	**Casey Legg**	Sr.	West Virginia
KR	**Malik Knowles**	Sr.	Kansas State
P	**Michael Turk**	Sr.	Oklahoma
PR	**D'Shawn Jamison**	Sr.	Texas

SECOND-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	**Dillon Gabriel**	Jr.	Oklahoma
RB	**Tahj Brooks**	Jr.	Texas Tech
RB	**Devin Neal**	So.	Kansas
WR	**Marvin Mims**	Jr.	Oklahoma
WR	**Myles Price**	Jr.	Texas Tech
WR	**Bryce Ford-Wheaton**	Jr.	West Virginia
TE	**Jahleel Billingsley**	Sr.	Texas
C	**Steve Avila**	Sr.	TCU
OL	**Hunter Woodard**	Sr.	Oklahoma State
OL	**Wyatt Milum**	So.	West Virginia
OL	**Anton Harrison**	Jr.	Oklahoma
OL	**Junior Angilau**	Sr.	Texas

SECOND-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	**Tyree Wilson**	Sr.	Texas Tech
DL	**Brock Martin**	Sr.	Oklahoma State
DL	**Jalen Redmond**	Jr.	Oklahoma
DL	**Eli Huggins**	Sr.	Kansas State
DL	**Tyler Lacy**	Sr.	Oklahoma State
LB	**Danny Stutsman**	So.	Oklahoma
LB	**DaShaun White**	Sr.	Oklahoma
LB	**O'Rien Vance**	Sr.	Iowa State
CB	**D'Shawn Jamison**	Sr.	Texas
CB	**Ekow Boye-Doe**	Sr.	Kansas State
S	**Anthony Johnson Jr.**	Sr.	Iowa State
S	**D. Taylor-Demerson**	Sr.	Texas Tech

SECOND-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	**Alex Hale**	Sr.	Oklahoma State
KR	**Brennan Presley Jr.**	So.	Oklahoma State
P	**Austin McNamara**	Sr.	Texas Tech
PR	**Jaylin Noel**	So.	Iowa State

THIRD-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	**JT Daniels**	Jr.	West Virginia
RB	**Taye McWilliams**	Jr.	Baylor
RB	**Kendre Miller**	Jr.	TCU
WR	**Phillip Brooks**	Sr.	Kansas State
WR	**Brennan Presley**	Jr.	Oklahoma State
WR	**Isaiah Neyor**	Jr.	Texas
TE	**Brayden Willis**	Sr.	Oklahoma
C	**Mike Novitsky**	Sr.	Kansas
OL	**Doug Nester**	Jr.	West Virginia
OL	**Darrell Simmons Jr.**	Jr.	Iowa State
OL	**Cole Birmingham**	Jr.	Oklahoma State
OL	**Grant Miller**	Sr.	Baylor

THIRD-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	**Keondre Coburn**	Sr.	Texas
DL	**Jaylon Hutchings**	Sr.	Texas Tech
DL	**Gabe Hall**	Jr.	Baylor
DL	**Dylan Horton**	Sr.	TCU
DL	**TJ Franklin**	Sr.	Baylor
LB	**Khalid Duke**	Jr.	Kansas State
LB	**Dee Winters**	Sr.	TCU
LB	**Rich Miller**	Sr.	Kansas
CB	**Woodi Washington**	Jr.	Oklahoma
CB	**Charles Woods**	Sr.	West Virginia
S	**Key Lawrence**	Jr.	Oklahoma
S	**Mark Perry**	Jr.	TCU

THIRD-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	**Griffin Kell**	Sr.	TCU
KR	**Jaylin Noel**	So.	Iowa State
P	**Tom Hutton**	Sr.	Oklahoma State
PR	**Derius Davis**	Sr.	TCU

2022 BOWL PROJECTIONS

Alamo Bowl
Oklahoma State vs. Oregon

Armed Forces Bowl
Iowa State vs. Houston

Cheez-It Bowl
Oklahoma vs. Miami (Fla.)

Guaranteed Rate Bowl
Kansas State vs. Nebraska

Liberty Bowl
West Virginia vs. South Carolina

Texas Bowl
Texas vs. Ole Miss

Sugar Bowl
Baylor vs. Texas A&M

2021 STANDINGS

	Big 12	Overall
Oklahoma State	8-1	12-2
Baylor	7-2	12-2
Oklahoma	7-2	11-1
Iowa State	5-4	7-6
Kansas State	4-5	8-5
West Virginia	4-5	6-7
Texas	3-6	5-7
TCU	3-6	5-7
Texas Tech	3-6	7-6
Kansas	1-8	2-10

2021 BOWL RESULTS

Liberty Bowl
Texas Tech 34, Mississippi State 7

Guaranteed Rate Bowl
Minnesota 18, West Virginia 6

Cheez-It Bowl
Clemson 20, Iowa State 13

Alamo Bowl
Oklahoma 47, Oregon 32

Fiesta Bowl
Oklahoma State 37, Notre Dame 35

Sugar Bowl
Baylor 21, Ole Miss 7

Texas Bowl
Kansas State 42, LSU 20

BAYLOR BEARS

National Forecast: 11 • Big 12 Prediction: 1 • Projected Record: 10-3, 6-3 Big 12

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Dave Aranda
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 14-9 (2 years)
CAREER RECORD: 14-9 (2 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jeff Grimes
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Ron Roberts
LOCATION: Waco, TX
STADIUM: McLane Stadium (45,140)

KEY BEARS

DILLON DOYLE, LB Starting all 23 games since transferring from Iowa, Doyle has had a team-high 145 tackles over two seasons at Baylor. Doubles as a fullback in short-yardage situations.

CONNOR GALVIN, LT Galvin earned first-team All-Big 12 honors last season as the anchor of a line that helped the Bears rush for 219.3 yards per game, up from 90.3 yards the year before.

SIAKI "APU" IKA, NT The transfer from LSU is a dominant presence up front. He earned first-team All-Big 12 honors, totaling 25 tackles, 4 sacks, 6.0 TFLs and four QB pressures.

KEY LOSSES

JALEN PITRE, S All-America safety had a team-high 18 tackles for a loss to go with 3.5 sacks, three fumble recoveries and two interceptions.

ABRAM SMITH, RB Smith rushed for a school-record 1,601 yards and 12 TDs on 257 carries (6.2 yards per) as one of the premier running backs in the country.

TERREL BERNARD, LB Led the team with 103 tackles and 7.5 sacks to go with 12.5 tackles for a loss, five QB hurries and four pass breakups.

RISING STAR

A mid-year enrollee two years ago, **TAYE MCWILLIAMS** is the next in line for the running back spot. The 6'1", 211-pound junior rushed for 102 yards and a touchdown in a win over Texas Southern and says he can "do a little bit of everything."

2022 RECRUITS

1	Armani Winfield, WR, Lewisville, TX	★★★★
2	Kaian Roberts-Day, Edge, Festus, MO	★★★★
3	George Maile, OL, South Jordan, UT	★★★
4	Alfonzo Allen, S, Miami, FL	★★★
5	Kelsey Johnson, TE, Red Oak, TX	★★★
6	Jeremy Patton, LB, Tenaha, TX	★★★
7	Richard Reese, RB, Bellville, TX	★★★
8	Devonte Tezino, DL, Killeen, TX	★★★
9	Corey Gordon, S, Oklahoma City, OK	★★★
10	Kaden Sieracki, OT, The Woodlands, TX	★★★
11	Tre Emory, DL, Mount Pleasant, TX	★★★
12	Jordan Nabors, WR, Rockwall, TX	★★★
13	Carmello Jones, Edge, Orange, TX	★★★
14	Reggie Bush, S, Frisco, TX	★★★
15	Alvin Ebosele, OT, Coppell, TX	★★★
16	Devyn Bobby, CB, DeSoto, TX	★★★
17	Coleton Price, OL, Bowie, TX	★★★
18	Cody Mladenka, TE, The Woodlands, TX	★★★
19	Timothy Dawn, OL, Camden, AR	★★★
20	Kyler Jordan, Edge, Lubbock, TX	★★★
21	Bryce Simpson, OT, Cypress, TX	★★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite

Midnight never came for Baylor's Cinderella story last year, a real-life fairytale that ended with a Big 12 championship, a school-record 12 wins (12–2) and a Sugar Bowl victory over Ole Miss.

Now, there's a target on its back going into an encore season without most of its proven playmakers on both sides of the ball.

"I think we're working with still something to prove," says sixth-year senior receiver Gavin Holmes. "We're not being complacent, going back to the roots of what we did last year to get us to that point."

Defensive coordinator Ron Roberts orchestrated a complete makeover of a beleaguered unit. But he's got a ton of production to replace in All-America safety Jalen Pitre, linebacker Terrel Bernard and safety JT Woods. "I honestly believe that we have a chance to be a higher-executing defense, just because we're older, our guys have been in the system," Roberts says. "The big thing will be that production: Who's it going to come from? I see it being spread out. But in my opinion, I think we can be better than we were last year."

An offense that lost a lot at running back and receiver got a boost with the return of four senior offensive linemen with starting experience. That includes Connor Galvin, a fixture at left tackle, along with former transfers Jacob Gall and Grant Miller.

"It's good that guys are back," says third-year head coach Dave Aranda, "but we need them to be at their best. And that requires them to kind of emerge from where they've been."

OFFENSE Sophomore Blake Shapen, who won a tight quarterback battle in the spring that sent Gerry Bohanon to the transfer portal as a grad transfer, "has a lot of natural ability as a passer," quarterbacks coach Shawn Bell says. Shapen showed that in the Bears' 21–16 win over Oklahoma State in the Big 12 Championship game, when he completed his first 17 passes and threw for 180 yards and three touchdowns to earn MVP honors. His leadership skills will have to improve, though, after getting just two starts last season and sitting out the bowl game with a shoulder injury.

"It's hard being a young guy that's kind of thrust into that role," Bell said, "and he's really focused on it. It's not as much physical all the time, especially at quarterback, it's more mental than anything else. I think leadership is probably Blake's point of interest."

Backed up by redshirt freshman Kyron Drones, Shapen will play behind an experienced line that includes Galvin and sixth-year senior Khalil Keith at the tackles, Miller and fifth-year senior Mose Jeffery at guard and Gall back at center.

That should also help a running back rotation that's expected to include Taye McWilliams, Craig "Sqwirl" Williams and converted receiver Josh Fleeks. Tight end Ben Sims is actually the leading returning receiver (31-361-6 TDs), but Holmes is a sixth-year senior who's expected to lead a young corps of receivers.

DILLON DOYLE

Baylor Athletics

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	UAlbany
Sept. 10	at BYU
Sept. 17	Texas State
Sept. 24	at Iowa State
Oct. 1	Oklahoma State
Oct. 13	at West Virginia
Oct. 22	Kansas
Oct. 29	at Texas Tech
Nov. 5	at Oklahoma
Nov. 12	Kansas State
Nov. 19	TCU
Nov. 26	at Texas

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 12-2, 7-2 BIG 12

Sept. 4	at Texas State	W	29-20
Sept. 11	Texas Southern	W	66-7
Sept. 18	at Kansas	W	45-7
Sept. 25	Iowa State	W	31-29
Oct. 2	at Oklahoma State	L	14-24
Oct. 9	West Virginia	W	45-20
Oct. 16	BYU	W	38-24
Oct. 30	Texas	W	31-24
Nov. 6	at TCU	L	28-30
Nov. 13	Oklahoma	W	27-14
Nov. 20	at Kansas State	W	20-10
Nov. 27	Texas Tech	W	27-24
Dec. 4	vs. Oklahoma State #	W	21-16
Jan. 1	vs. Ole Miss %	W	21-7

#Arlington, TX %Sugar Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	BIG 12	NATIONAL
Scoring	31.6 ppg	3	40
Rushing	219.3 ypg	1	10
Passing	203.4 ypg	8	92
Total	422.7 ypg	5	53

DEFENSE	PER GAME	BIG 12	NATIONAL
Scoring	18.3 ppg	2	10
Rushing	118.4 ypg	2	17
Passing	227.5 ypg	6	65
Total	345.9 ypg	4	31

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	BIG 12	NATIONAL
+13	+0.93	1	3

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	30.8	27
Defense	26.4	15
Margin	+4.4	14
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	45.8%	36
Defense	37.1%	10
Margin	+8.7%	14
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	6.5	27
Defense	5.2	27
Margin	+1.3	16
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	3.9	90
Defense	3.4	18
Margin	+0.5	48
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	5.1	7
Actual	12	6
Margin	+6.9	12

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

33

Dave Aranda's Bears were near the top of the nation in fourth-down attempts. Baylor opted to go for it rather than punt on 33 fourth downs, sixth most in the country, and they converted 57.8 percent of the time.

4.12

On average, Baylor's opponents started drives at the 26.4-yard line. The Bears leveraged that starting field position advantage to hold opponents to just 4.12 points per quality possession, 26th in the FBS.

4.16

On the offensive side of the ball, the Bears averaged 4.16 points per quality possession, 92nd in the FBS.

DEFENSE On top of the missing production, Bernard and Pitre in particular left a leadership void on the defense. The best candidates to fill that void? A defensive front that returns its entire two-deep and also added Tulsa transfer Jaxon Player. First-team All-Big 12 nose tackle Siaki "Apu" Ika is flanked by some combination of Cole Maxwell, Gabe Hall, TJ Franklin and Brayden Utley.

"It's something we've talked about literally since we got here: We want to lead from the front," defensive line coach Dennis Johnson says. "Big men leading the way. I think if we can take that step as a unit, we'll be a lot better as a whole team."

Matt Jones was slated to take over for Bernard at one of the two inside spots, but he missed spring camp with an injury and will be seriously pushed by LSU transfer Josh White, a former four-star recruit who was named the Houston Touchdown Club Defensive Player of the Year in 2019, and junior Will Williams.

Former Iowa transfer Dillon Doyle returns to the middle linebacker spot, where he's made 145 tackles over the last two seasons. With Jones moving inside, Garmon Randolph and sophomore Tony Anyanwu are battling for the outside JACK linebacker spot.

Cornerback Al Walcott and free safety Christian Morgan are the only returning starters in a secondary that's breaking in Devin Neal, Mark Milton and Lorando "Snaxx" Johnson at the other three spots in the back end. "I see (Johnson) as a young (Pitre) in that role," Roberts says of Johnson playing the Star position. "He's got the talent, he's got the playmaking skills. He's a very dynamic player."

SPECIALISTS The Bears have almost an embarrassment of riches at kicker, with the program's all-time career leader in field-goal percentage (John Mayers, 76.5 percent) backing up sophomore Isaiah Hankins, who won the job in fall camp last year and hit 14-of-20 and a perfect 57-of-57 extra points. Also back are punter Issac Power (45.0-yard average) and kickoff specialist Noah Rauschenberg. The only real question is who will replace Trestan Ebner on returns.

FINAL ANALYSIS Solid in both the offensive and defensive lines, the Bears should be in position to contend for another conference title if they can find enough playmakers. The test will be surviving a brutal road schedule that includes trips to Provo, Utah; Morgantown, W.Va.; Norman, Okla.; and Austin, Texas.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)				
WR	6	Gavin Holmes (Sr.)	88	Seth Jones (So.)
WR	80	Monaray Baldwin (So.)	16	Hal Presley (So.)
WR	34	Josh Cameron (Fr.)	19	Javon Gipson (Fr.)
LT	**76**	**Connor Galvin (Sr.)**	71	MJ Ruhman (Fr.)
LG	72	Mose Jeffery (Sr.)	65	Micah Mazzccua (So.)
C	**66**	**Jacob Gall (Sr.)**	50	Connor Heffernan (Fr.)
RG	**63**	**Grant Miller (Sr.)**	**58**	**Gavin Byers (Jr.)**
RT	64	Khalil Keith (Sr.)	77	Tate Williams (Fr.)
TE	**86**	**Ben Sims (Sr.)**	**83**	**Drake Dabney (Jr.)**
QB	12	Blake Shapen (So.)	15	Kyron Drones (Fr.)
RB	22	Taye McWilliams (Jr.)	20	Craig Williams (Jr.)
DEFENSE (7)			Returning Starters in **BOLD**	
DE	**96**	**Cole Maxwell (Sr.)**	90	TJ Franklin (Sr.)
NT	**62**	**Siaki Ika (Jr.)**	91	Jaxon Player (Sr.)
DE	**95**	**Gabe Hall (Jr.)**	54	Brayden Utley (Sr.)
JACK	55	Garmon Randolph (Jr.)	46	Tony Anyanwu (So.)
MLB	**5**	**Dillon Doyle (Sr.)**	**52**	**Matt Jones (Jr.)**
WLB	33	Will Williams (Jr.)		Josh White (So.)
CB	**13**	**Al Walcott (Sr.)**	19	AJ McCarty (So.)
CB	37	Mark Milton (Sr.)	21	Chateau Reed (So.)
STAR	11	Lorando Johnson (Fr.)	29	Romario Noel (Fr.)
WS	14	Devin Neal (Jr.)	26	Cisco Caston (Fr.)
FS	**4**	**Christian Morgan (Sr.)**	20	Devin Lemear (Fr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	98	Isaiah Hankins (So.)	**KR**	20	Craig Williams (Jr.)
P	43	Issac Power (Sr.)	**PR**	6	Gavin Holmes (Sr.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	**ATT**	**COMP**	**YDS**	**TD**	**INT**
Gerry Bohanon	275	173	2,205	18	7
Blake Shapen	**86**	**62**	**596**	**5**	**0**
Jacob Zeno	3	1	41	0	0
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Abram Smith	257	1,601	6.2	12	
Trestan Ebner	148	799	5.4	2	
Gerry Bohanon	**76**	**323**	**4.3**	**9**	
Taye McWilliams	**17**	**181**	**10.6**	**2**	
Blake Shapen	**21**	**59**	**2.8**	**0**	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Tyquan Thornton	62	948	15.3	10	
R.J. Sneed	46	573	12.5	2	
Ben Sims	**31**	**361**	**11.6**	**6**	
Drew Estrada	30	367	12.2	1	
Trestan Ebner	28	284	10.1	2	

KICKING: **Isaiah Hankins, 14-20 FGs, 99 pts.**
TACKLES: Terrel Bernard, 103; **Dillon Doyle, 90**
SACKS: Terrel Bernard, 7.5
INTERCEPTIONS: JT Woods, 6

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE BEARS

Opposing Coaches Size Up Baylor

"They're a top program and they're going to contend nationally under Dave Aranda. To see the offense evolve from where it started, Jeff Grimes really did an amazing job of taking those pieces they had and hammering out an identity. He turned a decent line into an amazing one. They ran the crap out of outside zone; you knew it was coming. That became their identity — outside zone, boots, nakeds. They had the highest third-down run average in the league and would set themselves up to go for manageable fourth downs. They did a great job developing their QB last year, getting him to a place where they didn't beat themselves, but when he was challenged to make plays and put the game on him, he had the throws. … They improved defensively; that's all Dave. They added that DT from LSU [Apu Ika], and everything changed. That one 300-pound-plus piece let them be more flexible on three- and four-down looks. It started right there for them, and they could be big and athletic up front. Their linebackers were great, and they really challenged the idea of defense in this league. … They have to replenish some guys, but Aranda should be considered a capable head coach. I think he turned down some bigger jobs than people realize, and that kind of buzz gets out and helps recruiting. They're going to be a force for a while."

IOWA STATE CYCLONES

National Forecast: 50 • Big 12 Prediction: 6 • Projected Record: 7-5, 5-4 Big 12

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Matt Campbell
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 42-34 (6 years)
CAREER RECORD: 77-49 (10+ years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tom Manning
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jon Heacock
LOCATION: Ames, IA
STADIUM: Jack Trice Stadium (61,500)

KEY CYCLONES

XAVIER HUTCHINSON, WR The Big 12's Offensive Newcomer of the Year in 2020, Hutchinson has caught nine touchdown passes in the last two years.

WILL MCDONALD IV, DE One of the best edge rushers in the sport, Iowa State's all-time career sacks leader was an All-American in 2021.

TREVOR DOWNING, C A move to center for his senior season will be key for the Cyclones as Downing looks forward to a career in the pros.

KEY LOSSES

BREECE HALL, RB A two-time consensus All-American, Hall scored 46 touchdowns over the last two seasons for Iowa State.

BROCK PURDY, QB The winningest quarterback in school history, Purdy will be missed for his leadership inside Iowa State's locker room as much as anything.

MIKE ROSE, LB The Big 12's Defensive Player of the Year in 2020 led Iowa State with 12 tackles for a loss last season.

RISING STAR

Replacing the most successful quarterback in the history of Iowa State football will not be easy, but **HUNTER DEKKERS** seems up to the task. He's got a big arm and had the opportunity to learn under Brock Purdy for the last three seasons. Dekkers has the frame to be dangerous in the running game as well.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Hunter Deyo, DL, Council Bluffs, IA	★★★★
2	Greg Gaines III, WR, Tampa, FL	★★★★
3	Jacob Imming, LB, Sergeant Bluff, IA	★★★
4	Domonique Orange, DL, Kansas City, MO	★★★
5	Andrew Keller, TE, Waunakee, WI	★★★
6	Jason Essex, WR, Kansas City, MO	★★★
7	Rocco Becht, QB, Zephyrhills, FL	★★★
8	Trevon Howard, S, Bradenton, FL	★★★
9	Will McLaughlin, LB, Harlan, IA	★★★
10	Cartevious Norton, RB, Waycross, GA	★★★
11	Ikenna Ezeogu, Edge, Blue Springs, MO	★★★
12	Quaron Adams, RB, Chandler, AZ	★★★
13	Jeremiah Cooper, S, El Paso, TX	★★★
14	Deylin Hasert, OL, Marshall, MN	★★★
15	Gabe Burkle, TE, Cedar Rapids, IA	★★★
16	Carson Willich, LB, Blue Springs, MO	★★★
17	Terrell Crosby, ATH, St. Petersburg, FL	★★★
18	James Neal, OT, Independence, KS*	★★★
19	Jontez Williams, ATH, Starke, FL	★★★
20	Tommy Hamann, Edge, Minneapolis, MN	★★★
21	Tyler Perkins, P, Norwalk, OH	★★★
22	Nate Glantz, QB, Omaha, NE*	n/r

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite *junior college transfer

After a rather disappointing 2021 campaign, Matt Campbell enters his seventh season at Iowa State in rebuild mode. However, the feeling in Ames is that for a program that prides itself on being developmental, Iowa State has young players who are ready to plug in and compete in the Big 12. Campbell, a three-time Big 12 Coach of the Year, has led Iowa State to bowl games in five of his six seasons in Ames. From the outside looking in, a cooling-off period wouldn't be much of a surprise. That isn't the expectation from within, though.

OFFENSE Iowa State loses star quarterback Brock Purdy, but the Cyclones did not look to the transfer market at quarterback in the offseason because of their belief in their Purdy protégé, former four-star recruit Hunter Dekkers.

"He was able to study behind a guy like Brock Purdy, who helped him with 'what to do' and watched how he paved the way and learned so much from him," Campbell says.

Dekkers saw some meaningful playing time during his redshirt freshman campaign, putting him in a good spot mentally leading into the fall. He has had time to mature behind the best quarterback ever to play at Iowa State. Dekkers, who has a stronger arm than Purdy, will be a threat with his legs as well.

How do you replace running back Breece Hall? That task is easier said than done, but junior Jirehl Brock will give it his best. Brock came in with Hall in the same recruiting class and was actually the higher-ranked prospect, according to some analysts. "Jirehl had to work through some failures at times, but he's really showed us he can play at a high level," Campbell says.

Iowa State needs to be better on the offensive line, and moving senior Trevor Downing to center is a good start. Across the board, veterans will start for Iowa State, which notably gets right tackle Jake Remsburg back after he missed 2021 with an upper-body injury.

The tight end and wide receiver positions will be fascinating to watch during fall camp. Iowa State loses two of the best tight ends ever to play in Ames in Charlie Kolar and Chase Allen. Youngsters Easton Dean and Tyler Moore will attempt to fill their shoes.

One gets a sense that Campbell's "Players, Formations, Plays" concept will be tested in 2022. With a plethora of talent and experience mixed with a bigger arm at quarterback, the Cyclones could look to open things up more this season.

Two-time first-team All-Big 12 receiver Xavier Hutchinson is back, as is promising sophomore Jaylin Noel, along with a host of other veteran wideouts.

DEFENSE Defense has been the staple of the Campbell era in Ames. As is the case on offense, Iowa State has plenty of talent to replace in 2022, but it is a blessing to have Will McDonald IV back for another go-round on the edge. Iowa State's all-time career sacks leader, McDonald is one of the top edge rushers in college football. Since 2020, McDonald's 22 sacks are second most nationally behind only Alabama's Will Anderson Jr.

XAVIER HUTCHINSON

Peter Brouillet

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Southeast Missouri
Sept. 10	at Iowa
Sept. 17	Ohio
Sept. 24	Baylor
Oct. 1	at Kansas
Oct. 8	Kansas State
Oct. 15	at Texas
Oct. 27	Oklahoma
Nov. 5	West Virginia
Nov. 12	at Oklahoma State
Nov. 19	Texas Tech
Nov. 26	at TCU

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 7-6, 5-4 BIG 12

Sept. 4	Northern Iowa	W	16-10
Sept. 11	Iowa	L	17-27
Sept. 18	at UNLV	W	48-3
Sept. 25	at Baylor	L	29-31
Oct. 2	Kansas	W	59-7
Oct. 16	at Kansas State	W	33-20
Oct. 23	Oklahoma State	W	24-21
Oct. 30	at West Virginia	L	31-38
Nov. 6	Texas	W	30-7
Nov. 13	at Texas Tech	L	38-41
Nov. 20	at Oklahoma	L	21-28
Nov. 26	TCU	W	48-14
Dec. 29	vs. Clemson #	L	13-20

#Cheez-It Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	BIG 12	NATIONAL
Scoring	31.3 ppg	4	43
Rushing	160.1 ypg	7	69
Passing	263.8 ypg	1	32
Total	423.9 ypg	4	49

DEFENSE	PER GAME	BIG 12	NATIONAL
Scoring	20.5 ppg	3	20
Rushing	122.5 ypg	3	21
Passing	188.2 ypg	1	11
Total	310.7 ypg	2	9

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	BIG 12	NATIONAL
+2	+0.15	5	53

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	28.8	68
Defense	28.9	66
Margin	-0.1	64
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	44.1%	56
Defense	39.5%	37
Margin	+4.6%	39
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	6.5	24
Defense	5.1	21
Margin	+1.4	13
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.5	35
Defense	3.8	39
Margin	+0.7	25
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	-1.4	89
Actual	1	57
Margin	+2.4	44

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

43

Iowa State was successful in limiting big plays, allowing only 43 plays of 20-plus yards in 2021, 22nd best among FBS defenses. The Cyclones allowed 12.4 yards per successful play.

45.3%

The Cyclones led the Big 12 in passing offense, and they also ranked 20th nationally in passing success rate in 2021, averaging success on 45.3 percent of their attempts.

4.58

Despite ranking 17th in quality possession rate allowed (40.2 percent), the Cyclones ranked 76th in points per quality possession, allowing 4.58.

New names will make up the rest of the three-man front, but Iowa State believes it is reloading on the first level. Isaiah Lee, a familiar name, is primed to start and take on multiple blockers in the middle. Blake Peterson is another guy who has a lot of reps and has earned his spot, and he should be the man opposite McDonald.

"There is so much flexibility with this group," Campbell says. "A lot of talent, a lot of guys that have played really good football and can go inside and out."

Replacing linebacker Mike Rose won't be easy on the second level, but getting O'Rien Vance back for an extra season is huge. Vance has started 32 games for the Cyclones, even after he missed much of 2021 to an injury.

Colby Reeder, a graduate transfer out of FCS Delaware, is a former All-CAA linebacker and should start immediately. Hunter Zenzen, Gerry Vaughn and Jacob Ellis should all see plenty of playing time, too.

On the back end of the defense, the loss of Isheem Young (transferred to Ole Miss) stings, as does the transfer of promising youngster Craig McDonald, although Beau Freyler played a lot at safety in the second half of last season. Iowa State loves its young cornerbacks Myles Purchase and T.J. Tampa. Veteran Anthony Johnson Jr. has moved from corner to safety for his extra year of eligibility.

SPECIALISTS Both the kicking and punting positions are totally open going into fall camp. The spots are so open that it's difficult to try to project starters out of the spring. It looks like Tyler Bittman and Tyler Perkins have the edge, but a full competition consisting of two or three prospects at each spot will commence in August. Noel is the primary return man, averaging 6.1 yards on punt returns and 26.0 on kick returns last season.

FINAL ANALYSIS The 2021 campaign may have been a little bit of a letdown for the fans in Ames, but the good news for Iowa State is that a 7–5 season can now be considered disappointing. That was unthinkable five years ago.

One gets the feeling Campbell is enjoying the challenge of reloading his roster with young, hungry and talented players.

The expectations for this season will no doubt be considerably lower compared to last year's squad, but if a few things go Iowa State's way, the difference in wins and losses might be negligible.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)				
WR	13	Jaylin Noel (So.)	16	Daniel Jackson (So.)
WR	**8**	**Xavier Hutchinson (Sr.)**	17	Darren Wilson Jr. (Sr.)
LT	66	Tyler Miller (So.)	75	James Neal (So.)
LG	**54**	**Jarrod Hufford (Jr.)**	73	Brady Petersen (So.)
C	**52**	**Trevor Downing (Sr.)**	62	Dodge Sauser (Fr.)
RG	**55**	**Darrell Simmons Jr. (Jr.)**	68	Zach Ross (Sr.)
RT	72	Jake Remsburg (Jr.)	67	Grant Treiber (Jr.)
TE	**43**	**Jared Rus (Sr.)**	83	DeShawn Hanika (Jr.)
TE	87	Easton Dean (Jr.)	82	Tyler Moore (Fr.)
QB	12	Hunter Dekkers (So.)	3	Rocco Becht (Fr.)
RB	21	Jirehl Brock (Jr.)	26	Eli Sanders (Fr.)
DEFENSE (3)			Returning Starters in **BOLD**	
DE	**9**	**Will McDonald IV (Sr.)**	3	MJ Anderson (Jr.)
NG	93	Isaiah Lee (Sr.)	56	J.R. Singleton (So.)
DE	91	Blake Peterson (Jr.)	11	Tyler Onyedim (Fr.)
SLB	4	Colby Reeder (Sr.)	40	Hunter Zenzen (So.)
MLB	**34**	**O'Rien Vance (Sr.)**	23	Will McLaughlin (Fr.)
WLB	32	Gerry Vaughn (Sr.)	35	Jacob Ellis (So.)
CB	5	Myles Purchase (So.)	10	Darien Porter (Jr.)
CB	25	T.J. Tampa (Jr.)	13	Tayvonn Kyle (Sr.)
S	17	Beau Freyler (So.)	33	Mason Chambers (Jr.)
BS	18	Malik Verdon (Fr.)	15	Trevon Howard (Fr.)
FS	**1**	**Anthony Johnson Jr. (Sr.)**		Blake Thompson (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	39	Tyler Bittman (Fr.)	**KR**	13	Jaylin Noel (So.)
P		Tyler Perkins (Fr.)	**PR**	13	Jaylin Noel (So.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Brock Purdy	407	292	3,188	19	8
Hunter Dekkers	**36**	**20**	**193**	**2**	**1**
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Breece Hall	253	1,472	5.8	20	
Brock Purdy	85	238	2.8	1	
Jirehl Brock	**37**	**174**	**4.7**	**1**	
Deon Silas	**13**	**75**	**5.8**	**2**	
Hunter Dekkers	**4**	**61**	**15.3**	**1**	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Xavier Hutchinson	**83**	**987**	**11.9**	**5**	
Charlie Kolar	62	756	12.2	6	
Jaylin Noel	**38**	**265**	**7.0**	**0**	
Breece Hall	36	302	8.4	3	
Chase Allen	26	284	10.9	2	

KICKING: Andrew Mevis, 20-23 FGs, 92 pts.
TACKLES: Jake Hummel, 80; Mike Rose, 73
SACKS: **Will McDonald IV, 11.5**
INTERCEPTIONS: 4 players tied with 2

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE CYCLONES

Opposing Coaches Size Up Iowa State

"This is a program that screams identity. They show, don't tell. You see it on the film; you see it from individual guys. The real success of Matt Campbell's time there is that they've embraced who they are, found an identity that works for them in scheme and recruiting and the whole package, and made it successful. … All that aside, this is a huge year for them. Maybe the biggest ever. They're losing so much. It's crazy. … [Brock] Purdy is gone, Breece [Hall] is gone, that really good tight end [Charlie Kolar] is gone, [Mike] Rose on defense is gone. … Defensively, they're trendsetters. [DC Jon] Heacock does a really good job. They're stout, they're mean and they do a really good job of setting themselves up for good situations on third downs. Look at their second-half stats. They actually get better as the game goes on, and they're very comfortable in close games. … Last season, I think they had a hiccup in their culture. They weren't as hard-nosed as they'd been before. Some games, they didn't show up as consistently, especially on defense. At first they surprised the league; then they'd out-tough you. Now we're curious what they can do next. … They're going to struggle early getting so many new guys game experience, but it wouldn't be surprising if they catch on down the stretch. They're not as talented going into this season, but no one thinks they can push them around."

KANSAS JAYHAWKS

National Forecast: 99 • Big 12 Prediction: 10 • Projected Record: 4-8, 2-7 Big 12

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Lance Leipold
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 2-10 (1 year)
CAREER RECORD: 148-49 (15 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Andy Kotelnicki
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Brian Borland
LOCATION: Lawrence, KS
STADIUM: Memorial Stadium (47,233)

KEY JAYHAWKS

KENNY LOGAN JR., S Emotional defensive leader who earned second-team All-Big 12 honors at safety in 2021 while also serving as a weapon on kickoff returns, averaging 27.9 yards per return last season.

JALON DANIELS, QB Wowed with his performance after becoming the starter in the Jayhawks' last four games, and that included a four-touchdown effort in the Jayhawks' 57–56 overtime road win over Texas. He gives KU its first no-doubt QB1 heading into a season since 2016.

DEVIN NEAL, RB Neal, a Lawrence native and former top high school player in the state, was KU's best offensive player the majority of the season as a true freshman while averaging 64 rushing yards with eight rushing touchdowns in 11 games.

KEY LOSSES

KYRON JOHNSON, DE The speedy edge rusher was the Jayhawks' most disruptive defender last season with 6.5 sacks and four forced fumbles.

KWAMIE LASSITER II, WR Steady target who quietly finished his career with the 12th-most receiving yards all-time at KU (1,550). Led the Jayhawks last season with 59 catches for 653 yards.

MALIK CLARK, LG A mainstay on the Kansas offensive line, the left guard started 40 combined games with the Jayhawks in his previous four seasons.

RISING STAR

Maybe it's more accurate to call him a "dropping star" due to his massive weight loss of late, but offensive lineman **ARMAJ REED-ADAMS** is set for a breakthrough season after showing up to KU's campus in 2020 at 391 pounds — and losing more than 70 pounds since then. He's primed to move from a backup slot to the starting right guard position.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Brian Dilworth, CB, Hollywood, FL	★★★
2	Kaleb Purdy, S, Saint Louis, MO	★★★
3	Joey Baker, OT, Southlake, TX	★★★
4	James Livingston, OT, Dexter, MI	★★★
5	Ethan Vasko, QB, Chesapeake, VA	★★★
6	Tevita Noa, TE, Salt Lake City, UT*	★★★
7	Mason Ellis, ATH, Mulvane, KS	★★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite *junior college transfer

The following statement is true with regard to Kansas football, even if it'd be crazy at nearly every other Power 5 program: The Jayhawks went 2-10 in 2021 — and created real positive momentum this offseason.

First-year head coach Lance Leipold made the most out of the bad hand he was dealt. Because he officially took over in Lawrence in early May 2021, he didn't get spring practices with the Jayhawks, nor did he know the personnel. That meant that progress took some time but was evident late in the season.

KU pulled off one of the upsets of the year in a 57–56 overtime road victory over Texas. After that — even with a depleted roster — the Jayhawks remained competitive in their final two Big 12 contests against TCU and West Virginia. The turnaround helped Leipold recruit, as KU added some immediate-help roster additions from the portal, including four Big Ten transfers.

Add it all up, and KU goes into 2022 with hope but still-modest expectations in Leipold's second season.

OFFENSE The biggest reason for KU's late improvement was the emergence of quarterback Jalon Daniels. After he was inserted as the starter for the final three games and three quarters, Daniels was dynamic, throwing for seven touchdowns with three interceptions while also adding three rushing scores.

KU's coaches feel good about the starting offensive line — including anchors Earl Bostick Jr. at left tackle and Mike Novitsky at center — but the team desperately needs rapid development from backups to avoid a significant drop-off if injuries occur.

Running back might be the team's deepest group. Devin Neal had a strong true freshman campaign while emerging as KU's offensive best player most of the season. Leipold also picked off a couple of talented transfers: Ky Thomas was Minnesota's offensive MVP in the 2021 Guaranteed Rate Bowl, while Sevion Morrison was a rotation back for Nebraska. Daniel Hishaw Jr. is a power runner who sat out 2021 with injury.

KU's receivers are an area of concern, though offensive coordinator Andy Kotelnicki believes fans are likely to be surprised by that group's progress. Luke Grimm, Trevor Wilson and Lawrence Arnold all posted 300-yard receiving seasons a year ago.

Kotelnicki also has plenty of bodies at tight end if he wants to go to heavy personnel packages. Mason Fairchild and Trevor Kardell were the top two guys a year ago, while Jared Casey also should have a role after becoming a cult hero following his game-winning two-point conversion catch against Texas. Juco transfer Tevita Noa gives KU a run-blocking option.

DEFENSE When asked for the most encouraging moments from spring practices, Leipold said, "Watching our defense." His guys have added weight and become more comfortable with schemes.

Defensive coordinator Brian Borland says his defen-

KENNY LOGAN JR.

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	Tennessee Tech
Sept. 10	at West Virginia
Sept. 17	at Houston
Sept. 24	Duke
Oct. 1	Iowa State
Oct. 8	TCU
Oct. 15	at Oklahoma
Oct. 22	at Baylor
Nov. 5	Oklahoma State
Nov. 12	at Texas Tech
Nov. 19	Texas
Nov. 26	at Kansas State

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 2-10, 1-8 BIG 12

Sept. 3	South Dakota	W	17-14
Sept. 10	at Coastal Carolina	L	22-49
Sept. 18	Baylor	L	7-45
Sept. 25	at Duke	L	33-52
Oct. 2	at Iowa State	L	7-59
Oct. 16	Texas Tech	L	14-41
Oct. 23	Oklahoma	L	23-35
Oct. 30	at Oklahoma State	L	3-55
Nov. 6	Kansas State	L	10-35
Nov. 13	at Texas (ot)	W	57-56
Nov. 20	at TCU	L	28-31
Nov. 27	West Virginia	L	28-34

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	BIG 12	NATIONAL
Scoring	20.8 ppg	10	111
Rushing	139.3 ypg	9	88
Passing	184.8 ypg	10	106
Total	324.2 ypg	10	113
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**BIG 12**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	42.2 ppg	10	129
Rushing	249.9 ypg	10	129
Passing	236.8 ypg	7	81
Total	486.8 ypg	10	126
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**BIG 12**	**NATIONAL**
+2	+0.17	4	50

Tim Umphrey

sive tackles didn't create enough havoc a season ago, and the coaches have addressed that schematically while looking to produce more disruptive plays. Sixth-year senior Sam Burt leads that group, while Miami (Ohio) transfer Lonnie Phelps appears to be KU's best speed-rush threat on the outside.

Borland is happy to have more depth at linebacker following a season in which KU was razor-thin there. Taiwan Berryhill received rave reviews from coaches this offseason and could emerge with more knowledge of the system. Meanwhile, Rich Miller and Gavin Potter are returning starters who should be helped by transfers Craig Young (Ohio State) and Eriq Gilyard (UCF), rotational pieces who should allow teammates to get more breathers.

The secondary is probably the team's biggest concern — even though it might house the Jayhawks' best player. Physical safety Kenny Logan Jr. returns for his senior year after earning second-team All-Big 12 honors, and while coaches feel good about the developing O.J. Burroughs next to him — he gained 10 pounds of muscle in the offseason — the options after that are unproven at best. Cornerback is also a spot where KU can't afford much attrition; returning player Ra'Mello Dotson and Michigan State transfer Kalon Gervin project as starters, but the Jayhawks are less confident beyond that with what they have.

SPECIALISTS Jacob Borcila (kicker) and Reis Vernon (punter) are incumbents, though both have room for improvement after ranking toward the bottom of the Big 12 in field-goal accuracy and net-punt yardage. Tabor Allen was a nice weapon as kickoff specialist with a high percentage of touchbacks, while Logan is a dangerous playmaker on kickoff returns.

FINAL ANALYSIS According to ESPN's Bill Connelly, KU has the 10th-most returning production in 2022 — a stat that usually portends a few-points-per-game improvement. The bad news for the Jayhawks is that they're starting from such a low level. Even with this bump, KU projects to remain comfortably at the bottom of the conference, meaning any conference win should still be considered an upset. Leipold, in other words, is not done digging out of the hole he inherited. This season still could be another important step forward, though, while potentially setting up bowl eligibility in 2023 or 2024 — a feat the program hasn't accomplished since 2008.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (9)

WR	**7**	**Trevor Wilson (Jr.)**	19	Steven McBride (Jr.)
WR	11	Luke Grimm (Jr.)	84	Kevin Terry (Jr.)
WR	**2**	**Lawrence Arnold (So.)**	81	Tanaka Scott (Fr.)
LT	**68**	**Earl Bostick Jr. (Sr.)**	75	Jackson Satterwhite (So.)
LG	**54**	**Michael Ford Jr. (So.)**	74	De'Kedrick Sterns (Fr.)
C	**50**	**Mike Novitsky (Sr.)**	54	Michael Ford Jr. (So.)
RG	55	Armaj Reed-Adams (So.)	59	Nolan Gorczyca (Fr.)
RT	**77**	**Bryce Cabeldue (So.)**	78	Nicholas Martinez (So.)
TE	**89**	**Mason Fairchild (Sr.)**	45	Trevor Kardell (So.)
QB	6	Jalon Daniels (Jr.)	**17**	**Jason Bean (Sr.)**
RB	**4**	**Devin Neal (So.)**	8	Ky Thomas (So.)

DEFENSE (7)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	47	Lonnie Phelps (Jr.)	37	Hayden Hatcher (Sr.)
DT	**98**	**Caleb Sampson (Sr.)**	11	Eddie Wilson (Sr.)
DT	93	Sam Burt (Sr.)	53	Caleb Taylor (So.)
DE	**99**	**Malcolm Lee (Sr.)**	90	Jereme Robinson (Jr.)
LB	**19**	**Gavin Potter (Sr.)**	15	Craig Young (Jr.)
LB	6	Taiwan Berryhill (Jr.)	49	Krishawn Brown (So.)
LB	**30**	**Rich Miller (Sr.)**	13	Eriq Gilyard (Sr.)
CB	18	Kalon Gervin (Jr.)	**2**	**Jacobee Bryant (So.)**
CB	**3**	**Ra'Mello Dotson (So.)**	16	Cam'Ron Dabney (So.)
S	5	O.J. Burroughs (So.)	0	Edwin White-Schultz (So.)
S	**1**	**Kenny Logan Jr. (Sr.)**	0	Edwin White-Schultz (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	83	Jacob Borcila (Jr.)	KR	1	Kenny Logan Jr. (Sr.)
P	24	Reis Vernon (Jr.)	PR	7	Trevor Wilson (Jr.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Jason Bean	**182**	**102**	**1,252**	**6**	**6**
Jalon Daniels	**117**	**81**	**860**	**7**	**3**
Miles Kendrick	18	12	106	2	1
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Devin Neal	**158**	**707**	**4.5**	**8**	
Jason Bean	**92**	**400**	**4.3**	**2**	
Amauri Pesek-Hickson	60	218	3.6	0	
Torry Locklin	**36**	**117**	**3.3**	**2**	
Jalon Daniels	**33**	**83**	**2.5**	**3**	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Kwamie Lassiter II	59	653	11.1	3	
Lawrence Arnold	**27**	**316**	**11.7**	**3**	
Trevor Wilson	**27**	**364**	**13.5**	**1**	
Luke Grimm	**22**	**349**	**15.9**	**3**	
Steven McBride	**15**	**88**	**5.9**	**0**	

KICKING: **Jacob Borcila, 9-15 FGs, 53 pts.**
TACKLES: **Kenny Logan Jr., 113; Rich Miller, 79**
SACKS: Kyron Johnson, 6.5
INTERCEPTIONS: **Jacobee Bryant, 2**

Returning Players in **BOLD**

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	29.8	45
Defense	32.7	23
Margin	-2.9	104
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	37.7%	112
Defense	54.3%	130
Margin	-16.6%	130
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	5.2	103
Defense	7.3	126
Margin	-2.1	126
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.0	85
Defense	5.4	130
Margin	-1.4	125
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	-0.6	84
Actual	3	41
Margin	+3.6	32

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

71.7%

Kansas' defense allowed a quality possession on 71.7 percent of all drives, worst in the nation. Opponents began drives against Kansas, on average, from their own 32.7-yard line.

0.323

Opponents averaged 0.323 EPA/rush against the Jayhawks; Kansas was the nation's worst in allowing rushing explosiveness and ranked 129th in rushing efficiency (53.9 percent success rate).

7.04

Kansas' pass offense averaged 7.04 yards per dropback in 2021. Their passing success rate of 38.5% ranked 82nd in the FBS.

SCOUTING THE JAYHAWKS

Opposing Coaches Size Up Kansas

"This was one of the best coaching jobs in college football last year. Think about it — the guy shows up at that program after spring practice, then you get the back leaving, the receivers leaving, and then fast-forward a few months and they're beating Texas. It's incredible. … They're still in a long-term rebuild; you see that on the defensive side. The defensive line was bad, and they couldn't do anything about it. Just a personnel issue. They've been aggressive in the portal, and they've been able to plug some Buffalo guys in, but that speaks to how bad the situation was before he got there. … If you're looking for a bright spot, I think it's the QB. The quarterback play got better as the season went on. [Jalon] Daniels is really raw, but he was creating sparks. When you're in a situation like Kansas, you're looking for the rally point, the way to make guys believe. He can do that because he had the offense in a better state after a few games. They're bringing in some transfer backs behind him that will probably start right away. … It's way too early still, honestly, but I think that staff is doing a better job than the previous one. Eventually, they'll have to solve their recruiting problems and start finding a way to connect to four-year talent at the high school level, but they're at least another season away from not relying on the portal."

KANSAS STATE WILDCATS

National Forecast: 41 • Big 12 Prediction: 5 • Projected Record: 8-4, 5-4 Big 12

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Chris Klieman
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 20-16 (3 years)
CAREER RECORD: 92-29 (9 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Collin Klein
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Joe Klanderman
LOCATION: Manhattan, KS
STADIUM: Bill Snyder Family Stadium (50,000)

KEY WILDCATS

DEUCE VAUGHN, RB A consensus All-American, Vaughn has already amassed 2,948 total yards and scored 31 touchdowns during his previous two seasons with the Wildcats.

FELIX ANUDIKE-UZOMAH, DE He was one of the Big 12's top pass rushers a season ago, ending the year with 11 sacks and six forced fumbles.

DANIEL GREEN, LB An experienced and talented linebacker who decided to return for another year of college football after making 89 tackles as a junior.

KEY LOSSES

SKYLAR THOMPSON, QB No quarterback in school history started more games over the course of his career than Thompson, who made 40 starts under center for the Wildcats over the course of five seasons. Produced 8,211 yards of total offense in his K-State career.

RUSS YEAST, FS The All-Big 12 safety made the most of his lone season with the Wildcats, grabbing a team-leading four interceptions.

NOAH JOHNSON, C Not only was he a dependable center for the Wildcats, but he was also the most vocal player on the entire team and provided valuable leadership.

RISING STAR

Wide receiver **RJ GARCIA II** appears ready to help Kansas State on offense this season. The redshirt freshman receiver impressed new offensive coordinator Collin Klein during spring practice. "In the skill area, I think RJ Garcia has really made some great strides," Klein said. "You can tell he has spent time in the weight room, and he is getting stronger, getting bigger, getting more confident, playing faster."

2022 RECRUITS

1	Jalen Klemm, OT, Gibsonia, PA	★★★
2	Adryan Lara, QB, Goodyear, AZ	★★★
3	Donovan Rieman, Edge, Enid, OK	★★★
4	Tobi Osunsanmi, LB, Wichita, KS	★★★
5	VJ Payne, LB, Buford, GA	★★★
6	Brayden Loftin, TE, Council Bluffs, IA	★★★
7	Jake Clifton, LB, Owasso, OK	★★★
8	Jordan Perry, ATH, Jefferson, GA	★★★
9	John Pastore, OL, Erie, CO	★★★
10	Tyson Struber, WR, Canton, KS	★★★
11	Drake Bequeaith, OT, Grapevine, TX	★★★
12	Vaai Seumalo, DL, Mauna Loa, HI*	★★★
13	Colby McCalister, CB, Friendswood, TX	★★★
14	Kobe Savage, S, Paris, TX*	★★★
15	Garrett Oakley, TE, Columbus, NE	★★★
16	Sterling Lockett, WR, Stilwell, KS	★★★
17	Jacob Parrish, ATH, Olathe, KS	★★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite *junior college transfer

College football experts like to say there is nothing more dangerous than a winning team that returns both its head coach and its starting quarterback.

This season, Kansas State is out to prove that it can win big with a different type of experienced duo.

Skylar Thompson is gone at quarterback, but head coach Chris Klieman is back, and so is star running back Deuce Vaughn. That alone should be enough for K-State fans to feel cautiously optimistic about the Wildcats' ability to build on their 8–5 season from a year ago, which ended with a dominant victory over LSU in the Texas Bowl.

Vaughn is one of the most versatile weapons in the Big 12, if not the nation. The junior running back is coming off a season in which he amassed 1,872 yards from scrimmage and scored 22 touchdowns. So long as new quarterback Adrian Martinez can continue getting Vaughn the ball, K-State shouldn't have problems moving the chains in 2022.

There is stability in Manhattan, like when a team returns its starting quarterback. If K-State can fix a few holes on defense, this could be Klieman's best season yet with the Wildcats.

OFFENSE Vaughn returns as the focal point of the offense. The 5'6" running back has been such a dynamo for the Wildcats that he can lead the team in both rushing yards and receptions on any given Saturday. But that doesn't mean K-State will be a one-man show on this side of the ball. Collin Klein, a former star quarterback in Manhattan, has been promoted to offensive coordinator, and he wants to bring a more aggressive, up-tempo attack to Bill Snyder Family Stadium. That will be a big change from the methodical approach of his predecessors. But players raved about the new system during spring practice.

Martinez, who spent the past four seasons starting for Nebraska, seems like an ideal fit to run the new-look offense as a graduate transfer. He is best known as a dual-threat passer, and his running ability will keep defenses off-balance by using misdirection plays that feature Vaughn. And he should have no problem connecting with veteran receivers like Malik Knowles, Phillip Brooks and Chabastin Taylor.

Underappreciated by Nebraska fans, Martinez piled up an impressive stat profile during his time in Lincoln, passing for 8,491 yards and 45 touchdowns and rushing for 2,301 yards and 35 scores.

Kansas State did lose some quality offensive linemen and a talented tight end from last year's roster. Those holes may not be simple to fill. But there are more than enough pieces returning for Klein to mold the offense into a unit that is capable of winning the Big 12 shootouts that pop up frequently.

DEFENSE The Wildcats should be ready to roll near the line of scrimmage, but there are questions for defensive coordinator Joe Klanderman to answer in the

DEUCE VAUGHN

K-State Athletics

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	South Dakota
Sept. 10	Missouri
Sept. 17	Tulane
Sept. 24	at Oklahoma
Oct. 1	Texas Tech
Oct. 8	at Iowa State
Oct. 22	at TCU
Oct. 29	Oklahoma State
Nov. 5	Texas
Nov. 12	at Baylor
Nov. 19	at West Virginia
Nov. 26	Kansas

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 8-5, 4-5 BIG 12

Sept. 4	vs. Stanford #	W	24-7
Sept. 11	Southern Illinois	W	31-23
Sept. 18	Nevada	W	38-17
Sept. 25	at Oklahoma State	L	20-31
Oct. 2	Oklahoma	L	31-37
Oct. 16	Iowa State	L	20-33
Oct. 23	at Texas Tech	W	25-24
Oct. 30	TCU	W	31-12
Nov. 6	at Kansas	W	35-10
Nov. 13	West Virginia	W	34-17
Nov. 20	Baylor	L	10-20
Nov. 26	at Texas	L	17-22
Jan. 4	vs. LSU %	W	42-20

#Arlington, TX %Texas Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	BIG 12	NATIONAL
Scoring	27.5 ppg	8	76
Rushing	162.4 ypg	6	64
Passing	199.9 ypg	9	96
Total	362.3 ypg	9	95

DEFENSE	PER GAME	BIG 12	NATIONAL
Scoring	21.0 ppg	4	23
Rushing	129.5 ypg	5	31
Passing	215.2 ypg	4	44
Total	344.7 ypg	3	29

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	BIG 12	NATIONAL
+4	+0.31	3	40

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	30.2	39
Defense	27.6	31
Margin	+2.6	29
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	46.5%	29
Defense	39.8%	41
Margin	+6.7%	29
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	6.4	39
Defense	5.5	47
Margin	+0.9	34
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.2	58
Defense	3.5	20
Margin	+0.7	27
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	3.4	19
Actual	3	41
Margin	-0.4	70

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

45.2%

Kansas State ranked 20th in rushing success rate at 45.2 percent. The Wildcats averaged 5.98 yards per rush and 10.7 yards per successful rush.

0.147

The Wildcats had a problem with allowing explosive passing plays on defense; they allowed 0.147 EPA/pass (98th in the FBS) and allowed 48 plays of 20+ yards on defense (56th).

3.64

When opponents didn't get the big play, they had trouble scoring on Kansas State. The Wildcats allowed 3.64 points per quality possession, ninth best in the nation.

secondary. Kansas State coaches were overjoyed when key contributors like Eli Huggins (defensive tackle) and Daniel Green (linebacker) opted to return for another year with the Wildcats. With star pass rusher Felix Anudike-Uzomah returning along with Nate Matlack at defensive end, and Khalid Duke coming back from injury in a linebacker/defensive end hybrid role, the Wildcats are very confident in their defensive front.

They will be good to go in that area as long as they can identify a quality linebacker to pair with Green. Keep an eye on transfer Will Honas there.

Much less is certain in the secondary. Kansas State needs to replace several starters after losing Reggie Stubblefield, Russ Yeast, Ross Elder and Jahron McPherson at safety. The Wildcats will most likely turn to some combination of Josh Hayes, Kobe Savage, Cincere Mason and Shawn Robinson to fill those voids. The good news is that Julius Brents and Ekow Boye-Doe are both back as expected starters at cornerback.

SPECIALISTS Opposing teams might need to get creative whenever they kick to the Wildcats. Knowles returned a pair of kickoffs for touchdowns last season. Brooks has returned multiple punts for touchdowns in his career.

The kicking specialists are solid as well. Chris Tennant is back to handle field goals after taking over those duties in the last half of the season. Jack Blumer will handle most punts. Ty Zentner, with a career average of 42.5 yards on 68 punts, is also back as a "super senior" to help in myriad ways with the kicking game.

FINAL ANALYSIS Klieman, who went 69–6 in five seasons as head coach at North Dakota State, has led Kansas State to a pair of eight-win seasons and two bowl games since he took over in 2019, but the Wildcats haven't contended for a conference championship under his guidance.

Perhaps that will change this year. If Martinez can hit the ground running at quarterback and K-State can fill a few holes on defense, this has the makings of his best team yet.

But Kansas State will play a tricky nonconference game against Missouri, and the Big 12 is never easy. The Wildcats' final record will probably come down to how they perform in toss-up games. This season may reveal a lot about Klieman's coaching acumen.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

WR	**4**	**Malik Knowles (Sr.)**	85	Kade Warner (Sr.)
WR	**8**	**Phillip Brooks (Sr.)**	1	Keenan Garber (Jr.)
WR	13	Chabastin Taylor (Sr.)	3	RJ Garcia II (Fr.)
LT	**50**	**Cooper Beebe (Jr.)**	56	Andrew Leingang (Fr.)
LG	62	Dawson Delforge (Sr.)	77	Carver Willis (So.)
C	55	Hayden Gillum (Sr.)	54	Hadley Panzer (So.)
RG	69	Taylor Poitier (Jr.)	76	Kingsley Ugwu (Jr.)
RT	**73**	**Christian Duffie (Sr.)**	70	KT Leveston (Sr.)
TE	19	Sammy Wheeler (Sr.)	81	Konner Fox (Jr.)
QB	9	Adrian Martinez (Sr.)	18	Will Howard (Jr.)
RB	**22**	**Deuce Vaughn (Jr.)**	31	DJ Giddens (Fr.)

DEFENSE (5)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	**91**	**F. Anudike-Uzomah (Jr.)**	93	Jaylen Pickle (Sr.)
DT	**92**	**Eli Huggins (Sr.)**	15	Robert Hentz (Sr.)
DE	97	Nate Matlack (So.)	47	Cody Stufflebean (So.)
LB	16	Will Honas (Sr.)	18	Gaven Haselhorst (Fr.)
LB	**22**	**Daniel Green (Sr.)**	37	Krew Jackson (Fr.)
LB	29	Khalid Duke (Jr.)	52	Nick Allen (Sr.)
CB	**23**	**Julius Brents (Sr.)**	4	Omar Daniels (Fr.)
CB	**25**	**Ekow Boye-Doe (Sr.)**	14	Marvin Martin (So.)
NB	12	Shawn Robinson (Sr.)	2	Kobe Savage (Jr.)
S	9	Cincere Mason (Sr.)	36	Hunter Henry (Jr.)
S	1	Josh Hayes (Sr.)	7	TJ Smith (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	17	Chris Tennant (So.)	KR	4	Malik Knowles (Sr.)
P	43	Jack Blumer (Sr.)	PR	8	Phillip Brooks (Sr.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	**ATT**	**COMP**	**YDS**	**TD**	**INT**
Skylar Thompson	233	162	2,113	12	4
Will Howard	**55**	**30**	**332**	**1**	**1**
Jaren Lewis	**23**	**12**	**154**	**1**	**2**
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Deuce Vaughn	**235**	**1,404**	**6.0**	**18**	
Joe Ervin	64	322	5.0	2	
Will Howard	**32**	**184**	**5.8**	**4**	
Malik Knowles	**15**	**106**	**7.1**	**0**	
Jacardia Wright	13	56	4.3	0	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Deuce Vaughn	**49**	**468**	**9.6**	**4**	
Phillip Brooks	**43**	**543**	**12.6**	**2**	
Malik Knowles	**29**	**441**	**15.2**	**4**	
Landry Weber	16	228	14.3	1	
Sammy Wheeler	**15**	**151**	**10.1**	**1**	

KICKING: Taiten Winkel, 7-9 FGs, 43 pts.
TACKLES: **Daniel Green, 89;** Cody Fletcher, 75
SACKS: **Felix Anudike-Uzomah, 11.0**
INTERCEPTIONS: Russ Yeast, 4

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE WILDCATS

Opposing Coaches Size Up Kansas State

"They've evolved into a consistent seven- or eight-win team that looks exactly like a seven- or eight-win team. That's a credit to their staff for the stability, but they're never going to blow you away. Chris [Klieman] has done a good job overall. We aren't sure why they made some of the staffing changes they did; everything seems to be functional looking from the outside and from what we hear. … Deuce Vaughn is a legit threat and one of the most explosive players in the entire league. He might be the best player in the Big 12 when the ball's in his hands. … The defense is switching up; that's probably going to be a good change for them. They were your traditional four-down, and now that's it's three-down, it seems like that will fit the personnel better. … I don't know why they got away from the OC [Courtney Messingham]; the scheme didn't really seem like a problem. That's a move that surprised a lot of people because they were really close… We look at them as a climbing program. They're the steadiest team going, and they're capable of a better year because Vaughn is the best player this staff has had in Manhattan. It's how they use him. Ultimately, you can measure a normal, good year and something better by the defense and the quarterback play. If they improve in those places, they can make more of a jump to get noticed nationally."

OKLAHOMA SOONERS

National Forecast: 13 • Big 12 Prediction: 2 • Projected Record: 9-4, 6-3 Big 12

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Brent Venables
RECORD AT SCHOOL: First Season
CAREER RECORD: First Season
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jeff Lebby
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Ted Roof
LOCATION: Norman, OK
STADIUM: Oklahoma Memorial Stadium (80,126)

KEY SOONERS

MARVIN MIMS, WR After a disappointing 2021 season, the Sooners need Mims to become a difference-maker on the outside.

DILLON GABRIEL, QB Winning at UCF is one thing. It's an entirely different thing to lead the Sooners in the Big 12. So the pressure's on for Gabriel.

DASHAUN WHITE, LB The defense needs leadership, and White is primed to offer that from the middle of the unit.

KEY LOSSES

CALEB WILLIAMS, QB Remember when he represented the future and the face of college football nationally? He still does — only it's at USC.

KENNEDY BROOKS, RB All the underrated Brooks did was produce, averaging 6.3 yards per carry on his way to 1,253 rushing yards and 13 TDs.

BRIAN ASAMOAH II, LB The team's top tackler — and leader with 55 unassisted stops — will be difficult to replace.

RISING STAR

JOVANTAE BARNES faces traffic in his rise to prominent playing time at running back, with senior Eric Gray and junior Marcus Major experienced and capable. But the freshman made quite the impression in the spring, as a ball carrier and receiver, bidding for a role. Maybe a major role. Barnes could add some electricity to the offense.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Gentry Williams, CB, Tulsa, OK	★★★★
2	Gavin Sawchuk, RB, Littleton, CO	★★★★
3	Jovantae Barnes, RB, Las Vegas, NV	★★★★
4	Robert Spears-Jennings, S, Broken Arrow, OK	★★★★
5	Jake Taylor, OT, Las Vegas, NV	★★★★
6	Jaren Kanak, ATH, Hays, KS	★★★★
7	Kobie McKinzie, LB, Lubbock TX	★★★★
8	Nick Evers, QB, Flower Mound, TX	★★★★
9	Jayden Gibson, WR, Winter Garden, FL	★★★★
10	Nic Anderson, WR, Katy, TX	★★★★
11	Jacob Sexton, OT, Edmond, OK	★★★★
12	Gracen Halton, DL, San Diego, CA	★★★★
13	Kip Lewis, LB, Carthage, TX	★★★★
14	Jayden Rowe, CB, Tulsa, OK	★★★★
15	Kaden Helms, TE, Bellevue, NE	★★★★
16	Kevonte Henry, Edge, Lawndale, CA	★★★
17	R Mason Thomas, Edge, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	★★★
18	Jason Llewellyn, TE, Aledo, TX	★★★
19	Jamarrien Burt, ATH, Ocala, FL	★★★
20	Cedric Roberts, DL, Pflugerville, TX	★★★
21	Alton Tarber, DL, Deerfield Beach, FL	★★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite

Oklahoma's winter spun into turmoil. Then torment. And finally … transition. Could triumph be next? Maybe. Maybe not.

Honestly, what's next is anybody's guess, amid a complete makeover of staff and roster. Sure, there are still plenty of brave faces around Norman after Lincoln Riley bolted the Sooners for USC, leaving fans feeling jilted and in denial over a coach leaving them, voluntarily, for the first time since Chuck Fairbanks jumped to the NFL in 1973.

Players hit the exits, too, including star quarterback Caleb Williams, joining Riley with the Trojans no less, one of eight transfers becoming ex-Sooners among 14 total starters lost.

Oklahoma leaned into its past, bringing back former coordinator Brent Venables for his long-awaited first go as a head coach. The Sooners tapped into the transfer portal, too, adding 10 players. There's reason for optimism. And pessimism. Which one will prevail?

OFFENSE The Sooners actually lost two former starting quarterbacks to the portal, with Spencer Rattler heading to South Carolina ahead of Williams joining the Trojans. Rattler was a Heisman favorite entering the 2021 season before losing his job to Williams, who headlines Heisman watch lists for 2022. That's serious star power.

Oklahoma hopes it struck big itself, luring Dillon Gabriel from UCF, where he passed for 8,037 yards and 70 touchdowns in two-plus seasons.

New Sooners offensive coordinator Jeff Lebby worked with Gabriel at UCF in 2019, so there's a clear connection — and appreciation — between the two. And Gabriel is a good fit to use in Lebby's up-tempo offense.

"(Dillon) wants to get better," says Lebby, who spent the past two seasons at Ole Miss. "Good's not good enough. He understands that. He's been a lot of fun getting back with."

Fair or unfair, Gabriel will undoubtedly be compared to fellow lefty Williams by fans and media, even if the offense's success doesn't rely solely on him.

And there's much to sort out around him. The offensive line returns three starters, albeit from a unit that surrendered 33 sacks a year ago. The group should be bolstered by Cal transfer McKade Mettauer, a second-team All-Pac-12 pick a year ago by PFF, although depth is slim.

Running back Eric Gray was solid yet unspectacular after transferring from Tennessee. Marcus Major moves into the mix, and look out for freshman Jovantae Barnes.

The receiving corps needs to elevate its play, especially with the departure via transfer of Jadon Haselwood (Arkansas) and Mario Williams (USC). Marvin Mims is a big-play receiver (22 ypr last season) who hasn't yet established himself as a go-to guy. Six others expected to play key roles combined for 29 catches in 2021.

There is optimism for an impact return of former five-star recruit Theo Wease from a serious foot injury that kept him out all of last season. "I'm 100 percent confident going into this season," Wease says. "I'll give you a scale from 1 to 10. … I'd probably say 11."

MARVIN MIMS

Tim Umphrey

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	UTEP
Sept. 10	Kent State
Sept. 17	at Nebraska
Sept. 24	Kansas State
Oct. 1	at TCU
Oct. 8	vs. Texas #
Oct. 15	Kansas
Oct. 27	at Iowa State
Nov. 5	Baylor
Nov. 12	at West Virginia
Nov. 19	Oklahoma State
Nov. 26	at Texas Tech

#Dallas

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 11-2, 7-2 BIG 12

Sept. 4	Tulane	W	40-35
Sept. 11	Western Carolina	W	76-0
Sept. 18	Nebraska	W	23-16
Sept. 25	West Virginia	W	16-13
Oct. 2	at Kansas State	W	37-31
Oct. 9	vs. Texas #	W	55-48
Oct. 16	TCU	W	52-31
Oct. 23	at Kansas	W	35-23
Oct. 30	Texas Tech	W	52-21
Nov. 13	at Baylor	L	14-27
Nov. 20	Iowa State	W	28-21
Nov. 27	at Oklahoma State	L	33-37
Dec. 29	vs. Oregon %	W	47-32

#Dallas %Alamo Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	BIG 12	NATIONAL
Scoring	39.1 ppg	1	8
Rushing	187.5 ypg	4	38
Passing	263.5 ypg	2	33
Total	451.0 ypg	1	18

DEFENSE	PER GAME	BIG 12	NATIONAL
Scoring	25.8 ppg	6	60
Rushing	129.0 ypg	4	30
Passing	261.8 ypg	9	109
Total	390.8 ypg	6	76

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	BIG 12	NATIONAL
+11	+0.85	2	7

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		Rank
Offense	29.4	56
Defense	27.9	38
Margin	+1.5	42
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	48.9%	13
Defense	42.5%	63
Margin	+6.4%	31
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	7.0	5
Defense	5.8	79
Margin	+1.2	17
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	5.2	2
Defense	4.3	83
Margin	+0.9	13
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	5.9	5
Actual	12	6
Margin	+6.1	22

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

0.251

Oklahoma ranked 123rd nationally in allowing 0.251 EPA/pass in 2021. Opponents were successful on 43.7 percent of all passes.

54.6%

Oklahoma avoided a third down on 54.6 percent of all sets of downs, ranking seventh nationally in third-down avoidance. The Sooners' 0.142 EPA/play on early downs ranked 10th.

5.80

When Oklahoma earned a quality possession (53.3 percent of possessions, 35th overall), they scored 5.80 points on average, ranking first in the nation by 0.32 points.

DEFENSE Venables brought successful veteran coach and new defensive coordinator Ted Roof with him from Clemson, giving the Sooners a unified approach to what's been billed as a complex defense. The system, however, is tried, tested and proven. Now to implement it, which will require mixing a group with limited experience with some key transfers.

Linebacker DaShaun White returns as a fixture and a link to Oklahoma's past and present. The rugged White finished third on the team with 66 tackles a year ago and figures to play a captain's role with this team.

Beyond White, there are plenty of defenders who have contributed, yet few who have starred, with the unit's other three regulars spread out among tackle Jalen Redmond, end Reggie Grimes and cornerback D.J. Graham.

Jeffery Johnson, a four-year starter at Tulane, arrives to plug a hole up front with his physical style in the middle. Trey Morrison made 41 starts at North Carolina and should play a key role in the secondary. Cornerback C.J. Coldon started across four seasons at Wyoming, and linebacker T.D. Roof — Ted's son — is at his fourth school after arriving from Appalachian State.

The opportunity exists for several defenders to make their move and their mark. And there are as many players with the credentials and the hype. Some Sooners say that the culture has changed for the better, although that's not uncommon to hear following a coaching change, especially one as controversial as Riley's departure.

SPECIALISTS The Sooners are calling on Zach Schmit to follow Gabe Brkic, one of the nation's top field-goal kickers the past three years. Michael Turk resumes the punting chores after posting the second-best FBS average per kick (51.2). Mims has game-breaking potential in the return game, while speedy and elusive receiver Jalil Farooq is another option.

FINAL ANALYSIS It took a while for Venables to find the right head-coaching fit, and it's one he's familiar with. His fiery style has galvanized fans and players alike. Oklahoma recruits top talent, and there's plenty on hand, but Venables' major task will be bringing everyone and everything together.

If the old Sooner Magic returns, OU could push its way into the CFP conversation. If last year's Sooner stumbles continue, there could be much grumbling in Norman.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

WR	10	Theo Wease (Jr.)	3	Jalil Farooq (So.)
WR	**17**	**Marvin Mims (Jr.)**	6	Cody Jackson (Fr.)
WR	12	Drake Stoops (Sr.)	81	Trevon West (Jr.)
LT	**71**	**Anton Harrison (Jr.)**	55	Aaryn Parks (So.)
LG	72	McKade Mettauer (Jr.)	74	Marcus Alexander (Jr.)
C	**73**	**Andrew Raym (Jr.)**	66	Robert Congel (Sr.)
RG	**56**	**Chris Murray (Sr.)**	70	Brey Walker (Sr.)
RT	64	Wanya Morris (Sr.)	59	Savion Byrd (Fr.)
TE	**9**	**Brayden Willis (Sr.)**	80	Daniel Parker (Sr.)
QB	8	Dillon Gabriel (Jr.)	7	Nick Evers (Fr.)
RB	0	Eric Gray (Sr.)	2	Jovantae Barnes (Fr.)

DEFENSE (3)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	14	Reggie Grimes (Jr.)	40	Ethan Downs (So.)
DT	77	Jeffery Johnson (Sr.)	94	Isaiah Coe (Sr.)
DT	**31**	**Jalen Redmond (Jr.)**	92	Kori Roberson (Jr.)
DE	33	Marcus Stripling (Sr.)	20	Clayton Smith (Fr.)
SLB	13	Shane Whitter (Jr.)	7	Jaren Kanak (Fr.)
MLB	28	Danny Stutsman (So.)	2	David Ugwoegbu (Sr.)
WLB	**23**	**DaShaun White (Sr.)**	18	T.D. Roof (Sr.)
CB	0	Woodi Washington (Jr.)	1	Joshua Eaton (Jr.)
CB	**9**	**D.J. Graham (Jr.)**		C.J. Coldon (Sr.)
SS	12	Key Lawrence (Jr.)	29	Jordan Mukes (So.)
FS	5	Billy Bowman (So.)	6	Trey Morrison (Sr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	34	Zach Schmit (So.)	**KR**	17	Marvin Mims (Jr.)
P	37	Michael Turk (Sr.)	**PR**	3	Jalil Farooq (So.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Caleb Williams	211	136	1,912	21	4
Spencer Rattler	187	140	1,483	11	5
Ralph Rucker	**2**	**2**	**20**	**0**	**0**
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Kennedy Brooks	198	1,253	6.3	13	
Caleb Williams	79	442	5.6	6	
Eric Gray	**78**	**412**	**5.3**	**2**	
Marcus Major	**15**	**83**	**5.5**	**0**	
Trevon West	**2**	**78**	**39.0**	**0**	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Jadon Haselwood	39	399	10.2	6	
Mario Williams	35	380	10.9	4	
Marvin Mims	**32**	**705**	**22.0**	**5**	
Mike Woods	32	381	11.9	2	
Jeremiah Hall	32	334	10.4	4	

KICKING: Gabe Brkic, 20-26 FGs, 117 pts.
TACKLES: Brian Asamoah II, 89; Patrick Fields, 71
SACKS: Isaiah Thomas, 8.0
INTERCEPTIONS: Delarrin Turner-Yell, 3

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE SOONERS

Opposing Coaches Size Up Oklahoma

"The best and most talented program in our league year in and year out, and now they're dealing with more change than they've seen in 20-some odd years. The good news is that most of that is gonna be limited to coaches, not players. … Brent Venables is going to bring in a lot of new stuff, new looks and get wild, but he's going to start with what they do well already. They had a great defensive line, the linebackers were fast and we thought the secondary improved. It's odd — they actually did more DL movement to create big plays last year than any year before, which is something that looks like Brent's stuff. Expect them to get more exotic and aggressive schematically as they settle in. … They have plenty of pieces on offense, even with the quarterback changes. [OC Jeff] Lebby is going to do a great job here. His specialty is putting a defense in stress. The biggest issue is whether or not he can find a quarterback who can follow that. That offense takes risks and expects the QB to absorb hits, the trade-off being they can blow you away with big shots. So can [Dillon] Gabriel stay healthy? That offense should work very quickly. … The definition of OU ball is that no matter what they're doing schematically, they're mean. They're harder than the other team. That's what Brent loves to do. His identity fits perfectly. They just need to play ball and ignore the noise about their old coach."

OKLAHOMA STATE COWBOYS

National Forecast: 17 • Big 12 Prediction: 3 • Projected Record: 8-4, 5-4 Big 12

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Mike Gundy
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 149-69 (17 years)
CAREER RECORD: 149-69 (17 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Kasey Dunn
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Derek Mason
LOCATION: Stillwater, OK
STADIUM: Boone Pickens Stadium (55,509)

KEY COWBOYS

SPENCER SANDERS, QB At times inconsistent, Sanders surged late last season to lead the Cowboys to the Big 12 title game and a Fiesta Bowl comeback win over Notre Dame.

TRACE FORD, DE When healthy, Ford has been dynamic for Oklahoma State. But after two ACL tears, he has something to prove.

BRENNAN PRESLEY, WR Now ready to seize the top receiver role, Presley offers big-play skills on offense and in the return game.

KEY LOSSES

MALCOLM RODRIGUEZ, LB A four-year starter and an All-American as a senior, Rodriguez led the Big 12 with 123 tackles in 2021.

JAYLEN WARREN, RB A late addition in the transfer portal before last season, Warren became the team's best back, rushing for 1,216 yards and 11 TDs.

TAY MARTIN, WR The Cowboys' go-to guy at wideout, Martin emerged as a force, catching 80 passes for 1,046 yards and 10 TDs, all team highs.

RISING STAR

OLLIE GORDON enrolled early, setting himself up to make an early impact in Mike Gundy's offense. With the team's lack of proven talent at running back, the former Texas high school star could thrust himself into the mix. Gordon, a top-25 running back recruit, served as a workhouse at Euless Trinity, carrying 225 times for 2,376 yards and 35 touchdowns.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Talyn Shettron, WR, Edmond, OK	★★★★
2	Ollie Gordon, RB, Euless, TX	★★★★
3	CJ Brown, RB, Beggs, OK	★★★★
4	Tyrone Webber, OT, St. Catherines, ON*	★★★★
5	Braylin Presley, ATH, Bixby, OK	★★★★
6	Garret Rangel, QB, Frisco, TX	★★★★
7	DeSean Brown, Edge, Choctaw, OK	★★★
8	Cameron Epps, CB, St. Louis, MO	★★★
9	Stephon Johnson, WR, DeSoto, TX	★★★
10	Mason Gilkey, WR, Pawhuska, OK	★★★
11	Landon Dean, DL, Frontenac, KS	★★★
12	Dylahn McKinney, CB, Colleyville, TX	★★★
13	Austin Kawecki, OT, Frisco, TX	★★★
14	Jaleel Johnson, DL, Oklahoma City, OK	★★★
15	Davis Dotson, OT, Tulsa, OK	★★★
16	Gabe Brown, LB, Stillwater, OK	★★★
17	Seleti Fevaleaki, DL, Corona, CA*	★★★
18	Xavier Benson, LB, Texarkana, TX*	★★★
19	Calvin Harvey, OT, Missouri City, TX	★★★
20	Tabry Shettron, TE, Edmond, OK	★★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite *junior college transfer

Oklahoma State rebranded itself on the path to a 12-win season last fall, winning 12 games to match the school record and falling just short — inches short — of a Big 12 championship.

The Cowboys conquered opponents regularly with — get this — defense. Dominant defense.

Now Oklahoma State seeks to affirm that that style of defense is real and repeatable, mixing it with trademark offense to stake a claim as Big 12 favorite, and maybe more, for 2022.

And why not? The Cowboys posted the most impressive wins in the league, toppling Oklahoma, Texas and Baylor (although the Bears scored revenge in the conference championship game) and beating the Irish in the Fiesta Bowl.

OFFENSE Oklahoma State's greatest reason for optimism revolves around quarterback Spencer Sanders, a senior who shined in most of the major moments a year ago, including the bowl game, earning Fiesta Bowl MVP honors. Sanders passed for 2,839 yards and added 668 rushing yards in leading the Cowboys attack. He's already one of just three Oklahoma State quarterbacks to total more than 4,000 passing yards and 1,000 rushing yards in a career.

Perhaps finally shaking a label as erratic, Sanders continues to strive to become better, both on the field and as a leader. And on the scoreboard. "Whatever I have to do to win," Sanders says. "Whatever it takes."

He'll need an infusion of help on the offensive line and at running back, where the Cowboys' offense took hits.

Preston Wilson, shifting from tackle to center, returns along with Cole Birmingham and Hunter Woodard as starters up front. Yet two holes remain, and depth was depleted by the transfer portal — until the portal reciprocated with three experienced additions, including USC transfer Casey Collier, a front-runner to seize a starting tackle spot.

At running back, Dominic Richardson looks to rise from key backup into the feature role, but he seems more of a complementary back than a game-changer. That opens the door for one of three freshmen to muscle his way to the top of the depth chart. One to watch: Ollie Gordon, a powerful four-star prospect from Fort Worth's Euless Trinity and an early enrollee who showed up bigger than expected in the spring, pushing 6'3" and 230 pounds.

"I'm just excited," Sanders says. "I want to watch and see him grow and see how he plays and how he develops."

Brennan Presley leads an otherwise young but exciting group of receivers. A big-play performer, Presley posted 1,113 all-purpose yards to rank second on the team.

A cast of sophomores, led by Blaine Green, offers playmaking potential, along with touted true freshman Talyn Shettron and veteran Braydon Johnson.

DEFENSE The Cowboys lost massive production on the defensive side, including six of the top eight tacklers, most notably linebackers Malcolm Rodriguez and Devin Harper. And coordinator Jim Knowles left for the same job at Ohio State after crafting the nation's No. 5 de-

SPENCER SANDERS

Peter Brouillet

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Central Michigan
Sept. 10	Arizona State
Sept. 17	Arkansas-Pine Bluff
Oct. 1	at Baylor
Oct. 8	Texas Tech
Oct. 15	at TCU
Oct. 22	Texas
Oct. 29	at Kansas State
Nov. 5	at Kansas
Nov. 12	Iowa State
Nov. 19	at Oklahoma
Nov. 26	West Virginia

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 12-2, 8-1 BIG 12

Sept. 4	Missouri State	W	23-16
Sept. 11	Tulsa	W	28-23
Sept. 18	at Boise State	W	21-20
Sept. 25	Kansas State	W	31-20
Oct. 2	Baylor	W	24-14
Oct. 16	at Texas	W	32-24
Oct. 23	at Iowa State	L	21-24
Oct. 30	Kansas	W	55-3
Nov. 6	at West Virginia	W	24-3
Nov. 13	TCU	W	63-17
Nov. 20	at Texas Tech	W	23-0
Nov. 27	Oklahoma	W	37-33
Dec. 4	vs. Baylor #	L	16-21
Jan. 1	vs. Notre Dame %	W	37-35

#Arlington, TX %Fiesta Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	BIG 12	NATIONAL
Scoring	31.1 ppg	5	45
Rushing	185.5 ypg	5	41
Passing	231.9 ypg	6	67
Total	417.4 ypg	6	55

DEFENSE	PER GAME	BIG 12	NATIONAL
Scoring	18.1 ppg	1	9
Rushing	87.6 ypg	1	5
Passing	210.2 ypg	2	35
Total	297.9 ypg	1	5

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	BIG 12	NATIONAL
-2	-0.14	6	79

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	30.3	35
Defense	25.9	7
Margin	+4.4	15
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	43.3%	62
Defense	35.8%	6
Margin	+7.5%	23
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	5.7	81
Defense	4.5	5
Margin	+1.2	21
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.2	64
Defense	3.3	15
Margin	+0.9	15
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	0.2	67
Actual	-1	71
Margin	-1.2	80

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

-0.262

Oklahoma State ranked first in the nation in allowing -0.262 EPA/rush. Opponents averaged a 30.7 percent success rate, ranking the Cowboys' defense fourth in rushing efficiency.

31.3%

Opponents converted just 31.3 percent of third-down attempts against Oklahoma State, ranking third nationally. Opponents faced an average distance of 7.52 yards to go.

0.059

Oklahoma State averaged 0.059 EPA/pass, 62nd among FBS offenses. The Cowboys averaged 6.76 yards per dropback and were successful on 45.9 percent of all attempts.

fense last fall. Oklahoma State, however, pivoted well, scoring a splashy hire in respected Auburn coordinator Derek Mason, who bolted from the Tigers after rumors of unrest on the coaching staff.

Mason hasn't changed much of what Knowles implemented, creating a smooth transition. And the aggressive system was credited for Oklahoma State's defensive turnaround as much as the players. "It was pretty easy for him to adjust," head coach Mike Gundy says.

Still, Mason has work to do in filling voids. He can lean on an experienced and talented front capable of controlling the line of scrimmage. Collin Oliver tied for the Big 12 lead with 11.5 sacks in earning Freshman All-America honors as a dynamic end. At least seven other players have made major contributions, including Trace Ford, who has been dominant at end but is returning from a second major knee injury.

The linebackers, led by junior Mason Cobb, have much to prove but are excited to finally get a chance.

"I feel like I've come into a time where the game's slowing down for me," says Cobb, known for being athletic and active.

The secondary also faces an overhaul, with safety Jason Taylor II the only returning regular among the five spots.

SPECIALISTS The Cowboys rank among the best in the country in the kicking game. Behind punter Tom Hutton, Oklahoma State allowed 0.8 yards per return, ranking second nationally. Kicker Alex Hale was slow returning from a knee injury, but he has converted 16-of-20 field-goal tries in his career.

Presley is a long-distance threat in the return game, with his 100-yard kickoff return for a score against Oklahoma as proof.

FINAL ANALYSIS Oklahoma State seemingly faces a significant reload, but Gundy's teams have done just that before, posting seven seasons of 10 wins or more since 2010.

The offense should be just fine, if not better than a year ago. The defense needs new playmakers, but the coaches believe they have just that.

And the Pokes enjoy playing the underdog, which they've been plenty over the past decade, when they rank 10th overall nationally in winning percentage.

"Let's go for a national championship," Sanders says. "I don't care we have a young team. … I feel like if we can go do it, let's go do it."

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

WR	28	Blaine Green (So.)	2	Talyn Shettron (Fr.)
WR	**80**	**Brennan Presley (Jr.)**	17	John Paul Richardson (So.)
WR	8	Braydon Johnson (Sr.)	85	Jaden Bray (So.)
LT		Casey Collier (So.)	**61**	**Jake Springfield (Jr.)**
LG	**67**	**Cole Birmingham (Jr.)**		Jason Brooks (So.)
C	**74**	**Preston Wilson (Jr.)**	66	Joe Michalski (Jr.)
RG	**70**	**Hunter Woodard (Sr.)**		Prince Pines (Jr.)
RT	76	Caleb Etienne (Jr.)	68	Taylor Miterko (Jr.)
TE	**90**	**Braden Cassity (Sr.)**	19	Bryson Green (So.)
QB	**3**	**Spencer Sanders (Sr.)**	13	Garret Rangel (Fr.)
RB	20	Dominic Richardson (Jr.)	0	Ollie Gordon (Fr.)

DEFENSE (5)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	**94**	**Trace Ford (Jr.)**	91	Tyren Irby (Sr.)
DT	56	Xavier Ross (Jr.)	99	Sione Asi (Sr.)
DT	**98**	**Brendon Evers (Sr.)**	**89**	**Tyler Lacy (Sr.)**
DE	30	Collin Oliver (So.)	**40**	**Brock Martin (Sr.)**
LB	0	Mason Cobb (Jr.)	11	Lamont Bishop (Sr.)
LB	1	Xavier Benson (Jr.)	45	Jeff Roberson (So.)
CB	7	Jabbar Muhammad (Jr.)	22	Demarco Jones (Jr.)
CB	2	Korie Black (So.)	8	Dylahn McKinney (Fr.)
S	13	Thomas Harper (Sr.)	12	Kanion Williams (Sr.)
SS	18	Sean Michael Flanagan (Sr.)	5	Kendal Daniels (Fr.)
FS	**25**	**Jason Taylor II (Sr.)**	14	Nick Session (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	19	Alex Hale (Sr.)	**KR**	80	Brennan Presley (So.)
P	29	Tom Hutton (Sr.)	**PR**	80	Brennan Presley (So.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	**ATT**	**COMP**	**YDS**	**TD**	**INT**
Spencer Sanders	**392**	**243**	**2,839**	**20**	**12**
Shane Illingworth	50	28	385	3	1
Ethan Bullock	3	2	16	0	0
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Jaylen Warren	256	1,216	4.8	11	
Spencer Sanders	**146**	**668**	**4.6**	**6**	
Dominic Richardson	**79**	**373**	**4.7**	**4**	
Dezmon Jackson	48	139	2.9	2	
Jaden Nixon	**14**	**122**	**8.7**	**1**	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Tay Martin	80	1,046	13.1	10	
Brennan Presley	**50**	**619**	**12.4**	**5**	
Jaylen Warren	25	225	9.0	0	
John Paul Richardson	**23**	**168**	**7.3**	**2**	
Blaine Green	**21**	**314**	**15.0**	**1**	

KICKING: **Tanner Brown, 17-21 FGs, 87 pts.**
TACKLES: Malcolm Rodriguez, 123; Devin Harper, 96
SACKS: **Collin Oliver, 11.5**
INTERCEPTIONS: Kolby Harvell-Peel, 3

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE COWBOYS

Opposing Coaches Size Up Oklahoma State

"If [DC Jim] Knowles hadn't left, we'd expect them to be right where they were last season. They're a more consistent program these last few years than in previous seasons. … It feels like year in, year out, they always find a really good, top-end running back, and the offensive line is good no matter who they just lost. Mike Gundy's touch is that they don't really beat themselves on offense. They don't do stupid things. … Spencer Sanders is sneaky good right now, but he could take that next step this year. That's the thing to watch. You can see him playing undisciplined or just too hot on film, but it seems like he found a good groove later on last season. … They work the portal really well, complementing what they do with their core. … Defensively, they lose their coach, but they're turning over a lot too. Honestly, that scheme they were running was flat out too complicated for a lot of teams in this league. That freshman DE [Collin Oliver] was a beast last year; he's definitely one to watch. … We consider the offense a known quantity, so we're just focused on the defense. How different will it be? This is the team that throws lots of fronts on you. They'd zero blitz, take big gambles and knock you around. Are they still going to come at you like that? Can they even pull it off with so much personnel change? If the defense is on par, they can win the league."

TCU HORNED FROGS

National Forecast: 55 • Big 12 Prediction: 8 • Projected Record: 6-6, 3-6 Big 12

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Sonny Dykes
RECORD AT SCHOOL: First Season
CAREER RECORD: 71-63 (11+ years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Garrett Riley
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Joe Gillespie
LOCATION: Fort Worth, TX
STADIUM: Amon G. Carter Stadium (47,000)

KEY HORNED FROGS

TAYE BARBER, WR The leading active receiver at TCU with 122 catches over three seasons and 27 starts. Led the squad in catches as a junior in 2020.

QUENTIN JOHNSTON, WR TCU leader in yards per catch his first two seasons, including a Big 12 true freshman-record 22.1 in 2020. Caught touchdowns of 20, 75 and 25 yards at Oklahoma in 2021.

DEE WINTERS, LB The Horned Frogs' most experienced linebacker, with 33 games played. A key in new defensive coordinator Joe Gillespie's three-linebacker plan because of his coverage flexibility.

KEY LOSSES

OCHAUN MATHIS, DE Led TCU in sacks in 2020 and tied for the team lead in 2021, earning second-team All-Big 12 honors both seasons. Started every game three consecutive years, then elected to transfer out.

ZACH EVANS, RB Frogs' leader in rushing in 2021 in only six games of action, registering four straight 100-yard outings — a first at TCU in 19 years — and averaging 7-plus yards per carry over two seasons.

LA'KENDRICK VAN ZANDT, S Made a game-saving tackle in a win at Texas in 2020, a highlight in a four-year career as a wide-ranging hybrid safety who created takeaways deep and played in the box as an extra run defender.

RISING STAR

GUNNAR HENDERSON had two offers out of high school in McAllen, Texas — Yale and Incarnate Word. He opted for the FCS San Antonio school, played two years then missed 2020 with a broken wrist. A walk-on at TCU in 2021, he earned a scholarship in 2022 from Sonny Dykes, who is enamored with the slot receiver's sheer speed.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Jordan Hudson, WR, Garland, TX	★★★★
2	Chace Biddle, S, Garland, TX	★★★★
3	DJ Allen, WR, Gladewater, TX	★★★★
4	Micheal Ibukun-Okeyode, Edge, Rowlett, TX	★★★
5	Major Everhart, RB, Amarillo, TX	★★★
6	Damonic Williams, DL, Mission Hills, CA	★★★
7	Kyron Chambers, S, Dallas, TX	★★★
8	Josh Hoover, QB, Rockwall, TX	★★★
9	Connor Lingren, DL, College Station, TX	★★★
10	Paul Oyewale, DL, Houston, TX	★★★
11	Ronald Lewis, CB, New Orleans, LA	★★★
12	Namdi Obiazor, S, Eden Prairie, MN*	★★★
13	Doug Blue-Eli, DL, Paulsboro, NJ*	★★★
14	Quinton Harris, OT, Arlington, TX	★★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite *junior college transfer

TCU has a new head coach and two new quarterbacks. Here you go, Sonny Dykes, as you begin your first year in Fort Worth — a quarterback competition to sort through. Go with Max Duggan, a veteran of 29 starts who's beaten Texas twice, can rocket the ball downfield, inspires with intense competitiveness and even led the team in rushing two years ago … or, try Chandler Morris, a high-pedigree recruit who transferred from OU after starring at Texas high school powerhouse Highland Park and stepped in to slay Baylor in 2021 in an initial TCU start marked by dazzling all-field accuracy, 531 total yards and three touchdowns.

Enjoy!

Dykes flashes a knowing smile, well-versed in the classic response to inquisitive fans and media. "The quarterback who takes care of the ball the best and handles situational football the best will end up being the starter," he says.

The biggest personnel decision of the summer will be clear by the time the Horned Frogs kick off at Colorado on Sept. 3.

"You wake up one day, you come to practice, and everybody kind of knows who it is," says Dykes, whose imprint is on Nick Foles, Jared Goff and Shane Buechele from his stops at Arizona, Cal and SMU. "The players typically know before the coaches who everybody believes in."

OFFENSE Either quarterback must have help, and the Frogs can offer veteran performers. Kendre Miller has a career 7.4 yards per carry average and is in line for lead-back duties following the departure of Zach Evans. Quentin Johnston slides from the 'Y' he's played for two years, averaging 20.4 yards per catch, to the 'X' to take advantage of his long speed and high-point skill. "We want the X to take the top off the defense," Dykes said. "That's what he can do." Super senior Taye Barber and Derius Davis are veteran slot options (192 catches combined), with Gunnar Henderson drawing raves for his grit and speed. Tight end Jared Wiley transferred from Texas to add a mobile pass target for new offensive coordinator Garrett Riley.

First-team All-Big 12 center Steve Avila anchors the offensive line, which also added versatile four-year SMU starter Alan Ali via transfer and already includes one of the conference's most promising tackles, Andrew Coker.

DEFENSE In Disney's "Aladdin," the hero sings of a "Whole New World" with "a new fantastic point of view." That's TCU on defense in 2022. The Horned Frogs have a new defensive boss for the first time this century, as Joe Gillespie is in as DC after holding the same job the previous three years at Tulsa, where he beat Dykes' Mustangs twice. His 3-3-5 defense replaces the 4-2-5 Gary Patterson had operated since 1998.

"We're not inventing anything," Gillespie says of his system, used by Iowa State to blank a fourth-ranked TCU squad in 2017 (the Frogs got their only points on a kickoff return for a touchdown) and similar to Baylor's three-man front under Dave Aranda. "We just made it an every-down defense. The 3-3-5 can turn into a 3-4 in a

QUENTIN JOHNSTON

Manny Flores

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	at Colorado
Sept. 10	Tarleton
Sept. 24	at SMU
Oct. 1	Oklahoma
Oct. 8	at Kansas
Oct. 15	Oklahoma State
Oct. 22	Kansas State
Oct. 29	at West Virginia
Nov. 5	Texas Tech
Nov. 12	at Texas
Nov. 19	at Baylor
Nov. 26	Iowa State

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 5-7, 3-6 BIG 12

Sept. 4	Duquesne	W	45-3
Sept. 11	California	W	34-32
Sept. 25	SMU	L	34-42
Oct. 2	Texas	L	27-32
Oct. 9	at Texas Tech	W	52-31
Oct. 16	at Oklahoma	L	31-52
Oct. 23	West Virginia	L	17-29
Oct. 30	at Kansas State	L	12-31
Nov. 6	Baylor	W	30-28
Nov. 13	at Oklahoma State	L	17-63
Nov. 20	Kansas	W	31-28
Nov. 26	at Iowa State	L	14-48

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	BIG 12	NATIONAL
Scoring	28.7 ppg	7	65
Rushing	196.2 ypg	3	29
Passing	239.6 ypg	5	60
Total	435.8 ypg	2	36

DEFENSE	PER GAME	BIG 12	NATIONAL
Scoring	34.9 ppg	9	118
Rushing	222.0 ypg	9	122
Passing	239.8 ypg	8	86
Total	461.8 ypg	9	119

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	BIG 12	NATIONAL
-4	-0.33	8	93

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	27.3	102
Defense	28.4	50
Margin	-1.1	84
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	44.6%	52
Defense	47.5%	116
Margin	-2.9%	97
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	6.7	11
Defense	7.3	128
Margin	-0.6	98
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.2	65
Defense	5.0	124
Margin	-0.8	109
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	-4.9	120
Actual	-3	82
Margin	+1.9	48

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

0.210

TCU's rush defense was uncharacteristically porous in 2021; the Horned Frogs allowed .210 EPA/rush, ranking 125th in the nation.

0.265

TCU's pass offense had an explosive ceiling, ranking fifth in EPA/pass; the Horned Frogs averaged 0.265 EPA/pass and had 60 plays of 20-plus yards on offense, 30th among all FBS teams.

4.5

When the Horned Frogs didn't connect on a big play, they had a hard time putting the ball in the end zone. TCU's 4.5 points per quality possession ranked 60th nationally and seventh in the Big 12.

hurry and also a 4-2-5 if you're not making any personnel substitutions."

And personnel is key — do the Frogs have sturdy bodies to hold the defensive line yet also get to the passer (think Baylor's James Lynch)? Who are the hybrid linebackers/safeties who can both cover and play in the box?

TCU has long built its defense on speed over size. Yet some answers are clear. Dee Winters is the Frogs' most experienced 'backer, and cornerback Tre'Vius Hodges-Tomlinson is coming off a first-team All-Big 12 campaign. To the mix, TCU added Navy transfer linebacker Johnny Hodges and Colorado transfer safety Mark Perry, and both emerged promptly in spring practice.

SPECIALISTS Griffin Kell and Jordy Sandy have kicked and punted for TCU the past three seasons, with Kell making 79-of-80 extra points and 29-of-39 field goals and Sandy delivering an average of 40.6 yards on 160 punts. Derius Davis has 50 combined kickoff and punt returns over the previous four seasons, including four to the house (three punt, one kickoff). In all cases, the Frogs know what they have on special teams.

FINAL ANALYSIS Unfamiliarity reigns at TCU, where a new head coach is in place for the first time in 21 years — the rival from the next county over, at that — and transfers are the way of the world. What's more, spring practices were — gasp! — open to the public, unheard of in the Gary Patterson era; the spring game was even televised.

For Dykes, the open door was about brand building and creating visibility for high school coaches, recruits and fans. "It's TCU's football team, TCU's family's and alumni's and boosters' and supporters' team, and they need to have an opportunity to see it and feel it up close," Dykes says.

But lately, nobody recognizes it. It's a program with losing seasons two of the past three years and three of the past six, well removed from its last postseason game (the infamous, interception-filled 2018 Cheez-It Bowl victory). Horned Frog football requires a makeover. Dykes at least sees a foundation. "If you look at the long run of success TCU has had, it's because guys have been tough and played hard," he says. "That mentality has existed here for so long. That's where it starts."

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

WR	**1**	**Quentin Johnston (Jr.)**	88	Quincy Brown (So.)
WR	22	Blair Conwright (Jr.)	18	Savion Williams (Jr.)
WR	**4**	**Taye Barber (Sr.)**	11	Derius Davis (Sr.)
LT	71	Marcus Williams (Jr.)	68	Michael Nichols (So.)
LG	78	Wes Harris (Sr.)	**77**	**Brandon Coleman (Jr.)**
C	**79**	**Steve Avila (Sr.)**	**75**	**Brannon Brown (Jr.)**
RG	53	John Lanz (Sr.)	56	Alan Ali (Sr.)
RT	**74**	**Andrew Coker (Jr.)**	76	Garrett Hayes (So.)
TE	84	Dominic DiNunzio (Jr.)	19	Jared Wiley (Sr.)
QB	**15**	**Max Duggan (Sr.)**	14	Chandler Morris (Fr.)
RB	33	Kendre Miller (Jr.)	9	Emani Bailey (Jr.)

DEFENSE (7)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	**98**	**Dylan Horton (Sr.)**	44	Colt Ellison (Sr.)
NT	99	Soni Misi (Sr.)	93	George Ellis III (Sr.)
DE	**95**	**Terrell Cooper (Sr.)**	90	Jaquaze Sorrells (So.)
SLB	**6**	**Jamoi Hodge (Jr.)**	19	Shadrach Banks (So.)
MLB	**13**	**Dee Winters (Sr.)**	0	Marcel Brooks (Sr.)
WLB	57	Johnny Hodges (Jr.)	12	Terrence Cooks Jr. (Fr.)
CB	**1**	**Tre'Vius Hodges-Tomlinson (Sr.)**	2	Kee'Yon Stewart (Jr.)
CB	21	Noah Daniels (Sr.)	**9**	**C.J. Ceasar II (Sr.)**
S	3	Mark Perry (Jr.)	16	D'Arco Perkins-McAllister (So.)
S	**28**	**Nook Bradford (Sr.)**	15	Josh Foster (Sr.)
S	26	Bud Clark (So.)	17	Deshawn McCuin (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	39	Griffin Kell (Sr.)	KR	3	Emari Demercado (Sr.)
P	31	Jordy Sandy (Sr.)	PR	11	Derius Davis (Sr.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Max Duggan	**227**	**145**	**2,048**	**16**	**6**
Chandler Morris	**76**	**50**	**717**	**3**	**0**
Sam Jackson	**1**	**1**	**77**	**0**	**0**
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Zach Evans	92	648	7.0	5	
Kendre Miller	**83**	**623**	**7.5**	**7**	
Emari Demercado	**96**	**446**	**4.6**	**4**	
Max Duggan	**105**	**352**	**3.4**	**3**	
Chandler Morris	**25**	**83**	**3.3**	**1**	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Derius Davis	**36**	**518**	**14.4**	**1**	
Quentin Johnston	**33**	**634**	**19.2**	**6**	
Taye Barber	**30**	**514**	**17.1**	**2**	
Blair Conwright	**14**	**257**	**18.4**	**2**	
Quincy Brown	**12**	**121**	**10.1**	**1**	

KICKING: **Griffin Kell, 14-18 FGs, 84 pts.**
TACKLES: **Dee Winters, 74;** T.J. Carter, 62
SACKS: **Dylan Horton, 4.0;** Ochaun Mathis, 4.0
INTERCEPTIONS: **Tre'Vius Hodges-Tomlinson, 2; Dee Winters, 2**

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE HORNED FROGS

Opposing Coaches Size Up TCU

"They've always been the team that's been hardest to read in the preseason. Maybe that will change now that Gary [Patterson] is gone. Some years when they're down, you turn the tape on a five-win team and you can't figure out why they didn't win nine or 10. I think the last few years they've lost one or two games and, boom, they're playing like they're out of it. … They've recruited really well, and Sonny Dykes' knowledge base of the roster and obviously in Texas is going to help them adjust quick. They have good backs, a good OL and they have decent overall speed. They have to settle on a quarterback. … The biggest change will be the schematic overhaul from Gary to the Tulsa DC [Joe Gillespie]. That's a classic case of Sonny having fits against that guy in the American and bringing him with him to the P5. … They're going to look more like other teams in the league on defense, which means more three down. They need talent on that side of the ball; they lost their best pass rusher to the portal. Portal culture probably hurt this program more than others. The truth is that you can look at the tape, and those kids played harder when Gary was gone. I think those kids' joy got stolen in the later years with him, and Sonny's gonna be the absolute polar opposite of that. He's gonna wanna let them get loose, change the attitude to something more positive and still play with an edge."

TEXAS LONGHORNS

National Forecast: 29 • Big 12 Prediction: 4 • Projected Record: 7-5, 5-4 Big 12

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Steve Sarkisian
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 5-7 (1 year)
CAREER RECORD: 51-42 (7+ years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Kyle Flood
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Pete Kwiatkowski
LOCATION: Austin, TX
STADIUM: Darrell K Royal-Texas Memorial Stadium (100,119)

KEY LONGHORNS

BIJAN ROBINSON, RB According to Pro Football Focus, Robinson broke 79 tackles in 2021, second nationally among running backs.

XAVIER WORTHY, WR Set UT freshman records for receptions (62), receiving yards (981) and TD catches (12).

DEMARVION OVERSHOWN, WLB Posted 5.5 tackles for a loss and two sacks in 2021 with two fumble recoveries and a blocked punt.

KEY LOSSES

CASEY THOMPSON, QB Had three games with at least five TD passes in 2021 (Texas Tech, Oklahoma, Kansas), the most ever for a Longhorn.

JOSH THOMPSON, CB Most consistent cornerback on the team in 2021 highlighted by an interception returned for a TD vs. Texas Tech.

CAMERON DICKER, K/P Booted three game-winning field goals before becoming the All-Big 12 punter in 2021 with a 46.7-yard average.

RISING STAR

Wyoming transfer WR **ISAIAH NEYOR** is a 6'3" junior with great length and contested-catch ability who led the Mountain West with 12 TD catches in 2021.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Devon Campbell, OL, Arlington, TX	★★★★★
2	Kelvin Banks Jr., OT, Humble, TX	★★★★★
3	Terrance Brooks, CB, Little Elm, TX	★★★★
4	Neto Umeozulu, OL, Allen, TX	★★★★
5	J'mond Tapp, Edge, Donaldsonville, LA	★★★★
6	Justice Finkley, Edge, Trussville, AL	★★★★
7	Bryan Allen Jr., S, Aledo, TX	★★★★
8	Brenen Thompson, WR, Spearman, TX	★★★★
9	Jaylon Guilbeau, CB, Port Arthur, TX	★★★★
10	Jaray Bledsoe, DL, Marlin, TX	★★★★
11	Maalik Murphy, QB, Gardena, CA	★★★★
12	Jaydon Blue, RB, Houston, TX	★★★★
13	Kristopher Ross, DL, Houston, TX	★★★★
14	Austin Jordan, S, Denton, TX	★★★★
15	Larry Turner-Gooden, S, Mission Hills, CA	★★★★
16	Malik Agbo, OT, Federal Way, WA	★★★★
17	Derrick Brown, Edge, Texarkana, TX	★★★★
18	Cole Hutson, OL, Frisco, TX	★★★★
19	Cameron Williams, OT, Duncanville, TX	★★★★
20	Zac Swanson, DL, Phoenix, AZ	★★★★
21	Ethan Burke, Edge, Austin, TX	★★★★
22	Aaron Bryant, DL, Southaven, MS	★★★
23	Trevell Johnson, LB, Arlington, TX	★★★
24	Connor Robertson, OL, Austin, TX	★★★
25	X'Avion Brice, ATH, Arlington, TX	★★★
26	Savion Red, ATH, Grand Prairie, TX	★★★
27	Will Stone, K, Austin, TX	★★★
28	Lance St. Louis, LS, Gilbert, AZ	★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite

Steve Sarkisian needed the offseason of all offseasons to help move on from Year 1. The 2021 season saw a 4–1 start derailed by three straight losses to Oklahoma, Oklahoma State and Baylor — after Texas held third-quarter, double-digit leads in each game — and then dissolved into a 5–7 finish that included a home loss to two-win Kansas and the program's longest losing streak (six games) since 1956.

Sarkisian got the offseason he needed. Texas landed a top-five recruiting class loaded with offensive and defensive linemen, and he nabbed Ohio State transfer quarterback Quinn Ewers, the nation's highest-rated recruit in 2021, according to the 247Sports Composite ranking.

Sarkisian also beefed up his staff by bringing in former TCU head coach Gary Patterson as a special assistant while adding high-energy up-and-comers — running backs coach Tashard Choice from Georgia Tech and receivers coach Brennan Marion from Pittsburgh, where he coached 2021 Biletnikoff Award winner Jordan Addison.

BIJAN ROBINSON

Sarkisian will need all the reinforcements he can get with a 2022 non-conference schedule that includes a home game against Alabama on Sept. 10.

OFFENSE The offense was the strength of the team last season but will have a new starting quarterback after Casey Thompson, who started 10 games in 2021 and led the Big 12 in TD passes (24), transferred to Nebraska.

Sarkisian will now decide between Ewers and redshirt sophomore Hudson Card. Card started the first two games in 2021, completing 61.4 percent of his passes with five touchdowns and one interception, but he lacked pocket presence before being replaced by Thompson. Ewers is UT's highest-rated recruit since Vince Young (in 2002) but hasn't started a football game since he helped Southlake Carroll reach the 2020 Texas 6A state championship. Ewers graduated early from high school, reclassified and enrolled at Ohio State in the fall of 2021, taking two regular-season snaps — both handoffs.

The offense has proven weapons, led by junior running back Bijan Robinson, who ran for 1,127 yards (5.8 ypc) and 11 TDs and was the Longhorns' third-leading receiver in 2021 (26 catches for 295 yards and four TDs).

Texas has a clear top three at receiver, led by sophomore speedster Xavier Worthy, who caught a UT freshman-record 12 touchdowns last season; junior Jordan Whittington, the team's most productive third-down receiver last season despite missing four games with a broken clavicle; and 6'3" Wyoming transfer Isaiah Neyor, a junior who also caught 12 TDs last season.

At tight end, Alabama senior transfer Jahleel Billingsley brings experience to a position that will rely heavily on two sophomores in Ja'Tavion Sanders and Gunnar Helm who have never started a college game.

The offensive line returns starters Junior Angilau at guard, Jake Majors at center and Christian Jones at tackle. But seven talented freshmen are fighting for jobs, including two of the nation's top recruits in five-stars Devon Campbell and Kelvin Banks Jr.

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	ULM
Sept. 10	Alabama
Sept. 17	UTSA
Sept. 24	at Texas Tech
Oct. 1	West Virginia
Oct. 8	vs. Oklahoma #
Oct. 15	Iowa State
Oct. 22	at Oklahoma State
Nov. 5	at Kansas State
Nov. 12	TCU
Nov. 19	at Kansas
Nov. 26	Baylor

#Dallas

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 5-7, 3-6 BIG 12

Sept. 4	Louisiana	W	38-18
Sept. 11	at Arkansas	L	21-40
Sept. 18	Rice	W	58-0
Sept. 25	Texas Tech	W	70-35
Oct. 2	at TCU	W	32-27
Oct. 9	vs. Oklahoma #	L	48-55
Oct. 16	Oklahoma State	L	24-32
Oct. 30	at Baylor	L	24-31
Nov. 6	at Iowa State	L	7-30
Nov. 13	Kansas (ot)	L	56-57
Nov. 20	at West Virginia	L	23-31
Nov. 26	Kansas State	W	22-17

#Dallas

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	BIG 12	NATIONAL
Scoring	35.2 ppg	2	18
Rushing	199.0 ypg	2	26
Passing	225.4 ypg	7	72
Total	424.4 ypg	3	47

DEFENSE	PER GAME	BIG 12	NATIONAL
Scoring	31.1 ppg	8	99
Rushing	201.6 ypg	8	114
Passing	224.0 ypg	5	62
Total	425.6 ypg	8	100

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	BIG 12	NATIONAL
-4	-0.33	8	93

Manny Flores

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	31.2	18
Defense	30.1	90
Margin	+1.1	49
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	44.8%	49
Defense	45.5%	101
Margin	-0.7%	77
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	6.4	35
Defense	6.1	102
Margin	+0.3	69
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	5.0	6
Defense	4.5	99
Margin	+0.5	44
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	0.3	64
Actual	-3	82
Margin	-3.3	100

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

43.8%

The Longhorn rushing attack was successful on 43.8 percent of attempts in 2021 (28th), averaging 5.37 yards per rush (50th). In short-yardage situations, Texas was successful on 76.1 percent of rushes, 16th in the nation.

0.085

Texas allowed 0.085 EPA/pass, posting the 74th-rated explosiveness figure in the FBS, and a 44.6 percent passing success rate, 106th. The Longhorn passing defense gave up 28 plays of 20-plus yards.

6

Texas ranked sixth nationally in red zone scoring percentage, at 93.02 percent.

DEFENSE You name it and last year's Texas defense struggled with it, giving up 31.1 points and 201.6 rushing yards (5.2 yards per carry) per game while failing to muster a pass rush.

Second-year defensive coordinator Pete Kwiatkowski has been picking the brain of new special assistant Patterson. The hope is that a deep defensive line combined with super senior weakside linebacker DeMarvion Overshown and the emergence of junior middle linebacker Jaylan Ford, who was the team's third-leading tackler last season despite making only two starts, will fortify UT's defensive front.

In the secondary, there are a lot of new faces in new places, starting with 6'3" Ohio State junior transfer cornerback Ryan Watts, who seemed to lock down the starting boundary corner position in the spring opposite super senior field corner D'Shawn Jamison.

At safety, Texas has a melting pot of players who changed positions, led by Anthony Cook, who started at nickel last year; junior Kitan Crawford, who moved from cornerback; and sophomore Morice Blackwell, who moved from linebacker. They join junior Jerrin Thompson, who started five games as the field safety last season and should see time at nickel back.

SPECIALISTS Texas must replace first-team All-Big 12 punter Cameron Dicker, who also finished his four-year career as UT's all-time points leader among field-goal kickers. The Longhorns' latest Pro Kick Australia import — Isaac Pearson — is expected to handle the punting, while field goals and kickoffs will come down to a battle between walk-ons Gabriel Lozano and Bert Auburn and scholarship freshman Will Stone. Jamison has returned two kicks and one punt for TDs at Texas and ranks fourth all-time at UT in kick return yards.

FINAL ANALYSIS Texas has turned over one third of its roster and has to improve in a lot of areas — offensive line, quarterback and everywhere on defense — while also finding a replacement for do-it-all kicker and punter Dicker. It's obvious from Texas' inability to hold double-digit, third-quarter leads against OU, Oklahoma State and Baylor last year (before suffering an embarrassing home loss to lowly Kansas) that Sarkisian's program didn't know how to finish games in 2021.

Facing Alabama after opening at home against ULM will either show how much progress Texas has made following its big offseason or will expose how big of a rebuild Sarkisian has in front of him.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)				
WR	**8**	**Xavier Worthy (So.)**		Agiye Hall (So.)
WR	4	Jordan Whittington (Jr.)		Brenen Thompson (Fr.)
WR	18	Isaiah Neyor (Jr.)	88	Casey Cain (Fr.)
LT		Devon Campbell (Fr.)	69	Andrej Karic (So.)
LG	**75**	**Junior Angilau (Sr.)**		Neto Umeozulu (Fr.)
C	**65**	**Jake Majors (So.)**	71	Logan Parr (Fr.)
RG	76	Hayden Conner (So.)	54	Cole Hutson (Fr.)
RT		Kelvin Banks Jr. (Fr.)	**70**	**Christian Jones (Sr.)**
TE	9	Jahleel Billingsley (Sr.)	0	Ja'Tavion Sanders (So.)
QB	3	Quinn Ewers (Fr.)	1	Hudson Card (So.)
RB	**5**	**Bijan Robinson (Jr.)**	2	Roschon Johnson (Sr.)

DEFENSE (4)				Returning Starters in **BOLD**
JACK	88	Barryn Sorrell (So.)	32	Prince Dorbah (So.)
NT	**99**	**Keondre Coburn (Sr.)**	93	T'Vondre Sweat (Sr.)
DT	95	Alfred Collins (Jr.)	90	Byron Murphy II (So.)
BUCK	18	Ovie Oghoufo (Sr.)	1	Justice Finkley (Fr.)
MLB	41	Jaylan Ford (So.)	30	Devin Richardson (Sr.)
WLB	**0**	**DeMarvion Overshown (Sr.)**	33	David Gbenda (Jr.)
CB	**5**	**D'Shawn Jamison (Sr.)**	13	Jaylon Guilbeau (Fr.)
CB	6	Ryan Watts (Jr.)	8	Terrance Brooks (Fr.)
NB	23	Jahdae Barron (Jr.)	28	Jerrin Thompson (Jr.)
S	**11**	**Anthony Cook (Sr.)**	37	Morice Blackwell Jr. (So.)
S	21	Kitan Crawford (Jr.)	27	JD Coffey III (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	96	Gabriel Lozano (So.)	**KR**	5	D'Shawn Jamison (Sr.)
P	49	Isaac Pearson (Fr.)	**PR**	5	D'Shawn Jamison (Sr.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Casey Thompson	261	165	2,113	24	9
Hudson Card	**83**	**51**	**590**	**5**	**1**
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Bijan Robinson	**195**	**1,127**	**5.8**	**11**	
Roschon Johnson	**96**	**569**	**5.9**	**5**	
Keilan Robinson	**45**	**322**	**7.2**	**3**	
Casey Thompson	55	157	2.9	4	
Jonathon Brooks	**21**	**143**	**6.8**	**1**	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Xavier Worthy	**62**	**981**	**15.8**	**12**	
Jordan Whittington	**26**	**377**	**14.5**	**3**	
Bijan Robinson	**26**	**295**	**11.3**	**4**	
Joshua Moore	24	265	11.0	3	
Cade Brewer	22	184	8.4	3	

KICKING: Cameron Dicker, 13-15 FGs, 88 pts.
TACKLES: **DeMarvion Overshown, 74; Luke Brockermeyer, 72**
SACKS: Ben Davis, 2.5
INTERCEPTIONS: B.J. Foster, 3

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE LONGHORNS

Opposing Coaches Size Up Texas

"When they get off the bus, nobody in college football looks better. Then they play you, and it all comes back down to earth. Bottom line, there's no dressing it up — they didn't play hard defensively last season. I don't know if it's because they didn't have all the pieces they needed or there was a cultural issue transitioning from the last staff, but they either chose not to play hard or didn't know how to. Either one is possible. Culturally, not enough has changed there. You look at Red River tape and they're on fire, or they're trying to be. Watch them after three losses, and they're over it. … In terms of talent, it's there, because it always is, but they were especially weak in the secondary. I know they're trying to fix that in the portal. Otherwise, if you're going ones on ones with your roster, you can't find the problem. Lines looks good, tight ends, running backs, all that. … The offense is interesting. It's smart. You know it's Sark's [Steve Sarkisian's]. You flip it on and you see the ideas he's working on. Coaches like to watch Texas' offense because he's so smart and creative. … You have to assume they're going to be much better pairing Bijan [Robinson] with [Quinn] Ewers. … It's been said a lot, but if Sark really is bringing an 'Alabama culture' to Austin, the second-year roster will improve tremendously when the expectations and ideas set in."

TEXAS TECH RED RAIDERS

National Forecast: 61 • Big 12 Prediction: 9 • Projected Record: 5-7, 3-6 Big 12

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Joey McGuire
RECORD AT SCHOOL: First Season
CAREER RECORD: First Season
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Zach Kittley
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tim DeRuyter
LOCATION: Lubbock, TX
STADIUM: Jones AT&T Stadium (60,454)

KEY RED RAIDERS

SARODORICK THOMPSON, RB Recorded 500 yards rushing with 10 touchdowns in an injury-plagued 2021.

TYREE WILSON, OLB/DE Started in five games as defensive end including the final four games of the year. He had 7.0 sacks with five QB hurries.

DONOVAN SMITH, QB Threw for 1,181 yards with seven touchdowns and two interceptions in 11 appearances and four starts for Texas Tech.

KEY LOSSES

COLIN SCHOOLER, LB Had 106 total tackles in 2021 with three forced fumbles and one interception. Finished his career with 481 total tackles.

ERIK EZUKANMA, WR Led Texas Tech in receiving for three straight seasons. He had 48 catches for 705 yards and four receiving touchdowns in 2021.

JONATHAN GARIBAY, K Connected on 15-of-16 field goals and 49-of-50 PATs last season.

RISING STAR

Running back **TAHJ BROOKS** emerged during SaRodorick Thompson's struggle with injury in 2021, leading the Red Raiders in rushing yards with 568 yards on 87 carries and starting in four of the nine games in which he appeared a year ago. He displayed explosiveness with four carries of at least 40 yards, a number that ranked 10th nationally. He also is a threat on special teams as a returner.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Maurion Horn, ATH, Broken Arrow, OK	★★★★
2	Joseph Adedire, DL, Arlington, TX	★★★
3	Landon Hullaby, S, Arlington, TX	★★★
4	Jalon Peoples, CB, Cedar Hill, TX	★★★
5	Trevon McAlpine, DL, Saraland, AL	★★★
6	Bryson Donnell, RB, Tyler, TX	★★★
7	Ty Kana, LB, Katy, TX	★★★
8	Tavares Elston, LB, Gulf Shores, AL	★★★
9	Syncere Massey, DL, Cedar Hill, TX	★★★
10	Erik Gray, OL, Amarillo, TX	★★★
11	Tyler King, WR, Houston, TX	★★★
12	Sheridan Wilson, OL, Argyle, TX	★★★
13	Ben Roberts, LB, Haslet, TX	★★★
14	Hut Graham, S, Gunter, TX	★★★
15	Coy Eakin, ATH, Stephenville, TX	★★★
16	Seth Martin, OL, Fort Worth, TX	★★★
17	Harvey Dyson, DL, Cedar Hill, TX	★★★
18	Kaden Weatherby, OT, Aurora, CO	★★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite

Texas Tech is coming off of an impressive win over Mississippi State in the AutoZone Liberty Bowl to send off now-Louisiana Tech coach Sonny Cumbie with a win after he was named interim Red Raiders coach following the firing of Matt Wells. Since then, Tech athletic director Kirby Hocutt hired Joey McGuire away from his assistant head coach position at Baylor, giving him his first college head-coaching job.

McGuire, a former Cedar Hill HS head coach, was quick in filling his staff, which boasts experience across the high school and college ranks. McGuire brought in Tim DeRuyter from Oregon as defensive coordinator and Zach Kittley to guide the offense. Kittley learned from former Texas Tech coach Kliff Kingsbury and is considered one of the best young offensive minds in the game.

McGuire and other coaches have stated that Wells and his staff, despite the firing, left the program with a solid foundation of culture that the new staff can build on. McGuire, like Wells, has hit the transfer portal, but McGuire also is already proving to be a big-time hit on the high school recruiting trail based off of his time in the high school ranks and his numerous connections across the state.

OFFENSE The Red Raider identity in recent years has been a fast-paced offense that puts up points. At his former stop at WKU, Kittley guided Bailey Zappe to a prolific, record-breaking season at QB. Now, he has a QB room with Tyler Shough, Donovan Smith and Behren Morton competing for the starting spot. Smith might have a slight edge with 11 game appearances and four starts under his belt. Shough is coming off of an injury but was a highly touted get for Wells and Co. when he transferred from Oregon. If he's fully healthy, Shough is capable of being the starter like he was in Week 1 of last year.

Wideout Erik Ezukanma has left for the NFL, so younger receivers like Loic Fouonji, Trey Cleveland and J.J. Sparkman will have to step up, although all have some experience under their belts. The running backs will once again be headlined by SaRodorick Thompson, but expect to see Tahj Brooks and Cam'Ron Valdez get reps to help in their development.

The offensive line will have to replace three starters from last year in center Dawson Deaton, tackle T.J. Storment and guard Josh Burger. Transfers Cole Spencer, Michael Shanahan and Cade Briggs will look to move into starting roles following the big departures up front.

DEFENSE The defense has been more of a question mark in years past than the offense, but the Red Raiders have found recent success and have even turned some defenders into Sunday guys — leaving some big shoes to fill.

In the trenches, Tony Bradford Jr., Tyree Wilson and Jaylon Hutchings all return and can be veteran voices on the defensive side of the ball. McGuire and his assistants have said that Wilson's upside is huge; he'll be a hybrid player who can put his hand down and rush the passer or drop into coverage in the flat. The Raiders want opposing offenses

SARODORICK THOMPSON

Texas Tech Athletics

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Murray State
Sept. 10	Houston
Sept. 17	at NC State
Sept. 24	Texas
Oct. 1	at Kansas State
Oct. 8	at Oklahoma State
Oct. 22	West Virginia
Oct. 29	Baylor
Nov. 5	at TCU
Nov. 12	Kansas
Nov. 19	at Iowa State
Nov. 26	Oklahoma

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 7-6, 3-6 BIG 12

Sept. 4	at Houston	W	38-21
Sept. 11	Stephen F. Austin	W	28-22
Sept. 18	FIU	W	54-21
Sept. 25	at Texas	L	35-70
Oct. 2	at West Virginia	W	23-20
Oct. 9	TCU	L	31-52
Oct. 16	at Kansas	W	41-14
Oct. 23	Kansas State	L	24-25
Oct. 30	at Oklahoma	L	21-52
Nov. 13	Iowa State	W	41-38
Nov. 20	Oklahoma State	L	0-23
Nov. 27	at Baylor	L	24-27
Dec. 28	vs. Mississippi State #	W	34-7

#Liberty Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	BIG 12	NATIONAL
Scoring	30.3 ppg	6	50
Rushing	159.1 ypg	8	70
Passing	257.2 ypg	3	39
Total	416.3 ypg	7	56
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**BIG 12**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	30.2 ppg	7	95
Rushing	136.8 ypg	6	40
Passing	268.2 ypg	10	119
Total	405.0 ypg	7	86
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**BIG 12**	**NATIONAL**
-4	-0.31	7	92

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	27.3	101
Defense	28.5	52
Margin	-1.2	83
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	45.8%	35
Defense	42.2%	60
Margin	+3.6%	47
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	6.7	13
Defense	6.0	92
Margin	+0.7	47
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.8	19
Defense	4.5	105
Margin	+0.3	65
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	0.3	65
Actual	-5	94
Margin	-5.3	111

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

0.183

Texas Tech's passing defense ranked 110th in explosiveness, allowing 0.183 EPA/dropack. The Red Raider defense allowed 48 plays of 20-plus yards, 75th in the FBS.

51.2%

Texas Tech allowed a third-down conversion on 51.2 percent of opponent attempts, making the Raiders the 126th-rated third-down defense in college football.

46

Texas Tech's passing and rushing offense both ranked 46th in the nation in efficiency in terms of EPA. The Red Raiders averaged 0.067 EPA/rush and 0.114 EPA/pass in 2021.

to have to be aware of where Wilson is at all times.

Things get hazy at linebacker because of the loss of Riko Jeffers and Colin Schooler. Now, Krishon Merriweather and likely Jesiah Pierre will be the guys in the middle for McGuire. Schooler, who transferred from Arizona in 2020, was the active FBS leader in career tackles and career tackles for a loss upon his departure, and he finished his career fourth on the school ledger in career solo tackles. Eric Monroe and DaMarcus Fields are also out of the door in Lubbock, but the depth created by the former staff now shines through with familiar faces like Reggie Pearson Jr., Adrian Frye and Marquis "Muddy" Waters likely filling in some starting roles on DeRuyter's defense. Overall, the defense will look similar to last season's, provided that Merriweather can adjust to being the main man in the middle.

SPECIALISTS Jonathan Garibay nailed a 62-yard field goal against Iowa State as time expired to send the Red Raiders to the postseason. Garibay drilled 60-plus yarders in late March at his pro day in Lubbock — meaning that he'll be needing a replacement next season. Trey Wolff has been on the team for a few seasons and handled kickoffs last year. He'll be in competition to replace Garibay as field goal specialist as will Gino Garcia, a FCS Houston Baptist transfer. Austin McNamara continues to be the Red Raider punter with tons of accolades behind him from previous seasons. Speed can be found throughout the Red Raider roster. With that said, guys like Chadarius Townsend, Myles Price, Brooks and Frye could be returning punts and kickoffs this season for Texas Tech.

FINAL ANALYSIS Under McGuire, Texas Tech will try to take the next step to that "elite" status that Hocutt talked about prior to hiring Wells. Immediate results may be hard to come by for McGuire and Co., but recruiting has been solid for the well-connected staff. Returning players at skill positions will aid in a smooth transition from a bowl-winning roster, but holes to fill on the offensive line will be a priority if this group wants to return to the postseason. Another important step will be to find a starting QB from among the three guys who are capable of filling the role. If Merriweather can fill the middle as well as Schooler did, expect the Texas Tech defense to keep taking strides toward being a successful unit. The experience that this staff inherited puts them ahead of schedule, but the Red Raiders will be seeking tangible results instead of "moral victories."

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (4)

X	10	Trey Cleveland (Jr.)	84	J.J. Sparkman (So.)
H	**18**	**Myles Price (Jr.)**	14	Xavier White (Sr.)
Z	11	Jerand Bradley (So.)	19	Loic Fouonji (Jr.)
LT	73	Cade Briggs (Sr.)	77	Ethan Carde (Sr.)
LG	**70**	**Weston Wright (Sr.)**	72	Landon Peterson (Jr.)
C	50	Michael Shanahan (Jr.)	64	Clayton Franks (Sr.)
RG		Cole Spencer (Sr.)	72	Landon Peterson (Jr.)
RT	**76**	**Caleb Rogers (Jr.)**	58	Jack Tucker (Fr.)
TE	**80**	**Mason Tharp (So.)**	43	Henry Teeter (Sr.)
QB	12	Tyler Shough (Sr.)	7	Donovan Smith (So.)
RB	4	SaRodorick Thompson (Sr.)	28	Tahj Brooks (Jr.)

DEFENSE (7)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	**19**	**Tyree Wilson (Sr.)**	92	L.B. Moore (So.)
DT	96	Philip Blidi (Jr.)	94	Larry Moore (So.)
DT	**95**	**Jaylon Hutchings (Sr.)**	97	Tony Bradford Jr. (Sr.)
LB	**1**	**Krishon Merriweather (Sr.)**	32	Tyrique Matthews (Sr.)
LB	16	Jesiah Pierre (Jr.)	49	Charles Esters III (Fr.)
LB	**22**	**Reggie Pearson Jr. (Sr.)**	20	Kosi Eldridge (Sr.)
DB	7	Adrian Frye (Sr.)	3	Kobee Minor (So.)
DB	24	Malik Dunlap (Sr.)	**12**	**Rayshad Williams (Sr.)**
DB	17	Nate Floyd (So.)	21	Cameron Watts (Sr.)
S	**9**	**Marquis Waters (Sr.)**	10	Cam White (Sr.)
S	**25**	**Dadrion Taylor-Demerson (Sr.)**	18	Tyler Owens (Sr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	36	Trey Wolff (Sr.)	**KR**	5	Chadarius Townsend (Sr.)
P	31	Austin McNamara (Sr.)	**PR**	7	Adrian Frye (Sr.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	**ATT**	**COMP**	**YDS**	**TD**	**INT**
Henry Colombi	149	96	1,291	5	5
Donovan Smith	**140**	**86**	**1,181**	**7**	**2**
Tyler Shough	**92**	**64**	**872**	**6**	**3**
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Tahj Brooks	**87**	**568**	**6.5**	**7**	
SaRodorick Thompson	**107**	**500**	**4.7**	**10**	
Xavier White	**68**	**310**	**4.6**	**3**	
Donovan Smith	**57**	**154**	**2.7**	**3**	
Erik Ezukanma	10	138	13.8	2	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Erik Ezukanma	48	706	14.7	4	
Kaylon Geiger	44	533	12.1	1	
Myles Price	**38**	**523**	**13.8**	**2**	
Travis Koontz	21	306	14.6	4	
Xavier White	**18**	**133**	**7.4**	**1**	

KICKING: Jonathan Garibay, 15-16 FGs, 94 pts.
TACKLES: Colin Schooler, 106; Eric Monroe, 85
SACKS: **Tyree Wilson, 7.0**
INTERCEPTIONS: **Dadrion Taylor-Demerson, 3**

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE RED RAIDERS

Opposing Coaches Size Up Texas Tech

"You aren't going to find a lot of coaches who liked the way the administration went about their business. They bailed on [Matt] Wells early, in-season, and fired him with a winning record. The schedule was back-loaded, but still, he was doing about what was expected of him at that point. And we know they made that change specifically to bring Joey [McGuire] over from Baylor. So how much patience are they going to have with a guy they hand-picked for a program that was already winning? It will come down to QB play for them. [Tyler] Shough can play really well; that broken collarbone came at a really bad time. How will he pair with [offensive coordinator Zach] Kittley? They're going to throw it a lot. It's going to be closer to the Kliff Kingsbury stuff there. The skill is there at wide receiver. That's probably one of the most consistent position groups in the league. They always look like a basketball team out there. Defensively, they ran a 3-3 stack last year; I think Tim [DeRuyter] will keep it somewhat similar at first… I think the hires have a lot more to do with the networking sides and how they can get a better hold on recruiting. That could really help their defense in the long run. … How much are they expecting in that first season? Is seven wins a disappointment? It's going to be really interesting."

WEST VIRGINIA MOUNTAINEERS

National Forecast: 51 • Big 12 Prediction: 7 • Projected Record: 7-5, 5-4 Big 12

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Neal Brown
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 17-18 (3 years)
CAREER RECORD: 52-34 (7 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Graham Harrell
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jordan Lesley
LOCATION: Morgantown, WV
STADIUM: Milan Puskar Stadium (60,000)

KEY MOUNTAINEERS

BRYCE FORD-WHEATON, WR Has shown flashes of being a big-time threat and will be asked to lead the wide receivers group.

WYATT MILUM, LT Took over the starting spot as a true freshman last season and will anchor the left side of an experienced offensive line.

DANTE STILLS, DT In a surprise to many, Stills returns for his free year and will be the leader of an inexperienced defense.

KEY LOSSES

LEDDIE BROWN, RB Rushed for nearly 3,000 yards in his career and was a workhorse when the offense became stagnant.

AKHEEM MESIDOR, DL In a surprising move, the All-Big 12 performer decided to transfer, taking his 9.5 sacks over the last two seasons with him.

JOSH CHANDLER-SEMEDO, LB Was a leader on the defense a year ago but decided to use his free year elsewhere.

RISING STAR

Wide receiver **KADEN PRATHER** was a highly touted recruit and came on strong at the end of last season as a true freshman. Now a sophomore in a depleted WR room, Prather has a chance to break out as a big-time target in the Big 12.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Jacolby Spells, CB, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	★★★★
2	Nicco Marchiol, QB, Chandler, AZ	★★★★
3	Travious Lathan, LB, Miami, FL	★★★
4	Christion Stokes, S, Harper Woods, MI	★★★
5	Corbin Page, TE, Huntington, WV	★★★
6	Lee Kpogba, LB, Winston-Salem, NC*	★★★
7	Landen Livingston, OL, Leo, IN	★★★
8	Jarel Williams, WR, Saraland, AL	★★★
9	Raleigh Collins III, LB, Philadelphia, PA	★★★
10	Aric Burton, Edge, Clearwater, FL	★★★
11	Hersey McLaurin, S, Ellisville, MS*	★★★
12	Sullivan Weidman, OT, Brookline, MA	★★★
13	Maurice Hamilton, OL, Cleveland, OH	★★★
14	Jeremiah Aaron, WR, Natchitochces, LA*	★★★
15	Mumu Bin-Wahad, S, Loganville, GA	★★★
16	De'Carlo Donaldson Jr., TE, Miami, FL	★★★
17	Asani Redwood, Edge, Suwanee, GA	★★★
18	Tyrin Woodby, S, Baltimore, MD	★★★
19	Cortez Braham, WR, Blythewood, SC*	★★★
20	Charlie Katarincic, OL, Wallingford, CT	★★★
21	Oliver Straw, P, Melbourne, Aus	★★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite

*junior college transfer

WVU head coach Neal Brown is entering his fourth season at the helm for the Mountaineers, but the results have been about as average as they can get since he took over in 2019.

With a mark of 17–18 the last three seasons, pressure is beginning to mount for Brown, but this season's edition could be the fresh start the Mountaineers need. With three full recruiting classes under Brown's belt, this is his team now, and new faces will be evident in all three phases, whether it's because of eligibility expiration or losses in the transfer portal.

With the fan base already sitting on pins and needles, and traditional rivals Pittsburgh and Virginia Tech awaiting in non-conference play, this is a critical season for Brown's tenure. Inexperience that some could say provides youthful energy, mixed with veterans in the trenches who have been through the grind, will make for another "wait and see" season.

OFFENSE Under new offensive coordinator Graham Harrell, the offense will have a different look — especially the quarterbacks. Maligned QB Jarret Doege decided to use his final year at WKU, so it will be a four-horse race for the starting spot.

JT Daniels transfers in from Georgia, having thrown for nearly 5,000 yards and 32 touchdowns in his college career. Sophomore Garrett Greene played significant snaps last season as a change-of-pace to Doege, mainly using his legs to make plays. However, he showed little in the passing game when he got his opportunities. Will "Goose" Crowder, who redshirted last season in his first year on campus, is similar to Daniels in that he's more of a pocket passer, and the coaches mentioned his continuous improvement throughout last season and the spring. True freshman Nicco Marchiol is a lefty who showed the ability to be a dual-threat that helped him earn his lofty recruit ranking.

A replacement for Leddie Brown at running back is needed, though it appears junior Tony Mathis Jr. will be given the reins after a strong ending to last season. Clemson transfer Lyn-J Dixon provides a home-run threat that the Mountaineers haven't had in a long time, and sophomore Justin Johnson Jr. and redshirt freshman Jaylen Anderson will provide depth for what Coach Brown considers his most talented backfield since he's been in Morgantown.

At wide receiver, Bryce Ford-Wheaton and Sam James could be two of the best returnees in the Big 12, and Kaden Prather has superstar potential. Depth is a concern, but Reese Smith and Jarel Williams, as well as juco newcomers Jeremiah Aaron and Cortez Braham, will be in the mix. Mike O'Laughlin is a threat to catch the ball at tight end, and Colorado State transfer Brian Polendey will be an extension of the offensive line.

The line is expected to be a strength with all five starters returning, anchored by Wyatt Milum at left tackle.

DANTE STILLS

West Virginia Athletics

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	at Pittsburgh
Sept. 10	Kansas
Sept. 17	Towson
Sept. 22	at Virginia Tech
Oct. 1	at Texas
Oct. 13	Baylor
Oct. 22	at Texas Tech
Oct. 29	TCU
Nov. 5	at Iowa State
Nov. 12	Oklahoma
Nov. 19	Kansas State
Nov. 26	at Oklahoma State

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 6-7, 4-5 BIG 12

Sept. 4	at Maryland	L	24-30
Sept. 11	LIU	W	66-0
Sept. 18	Virginia Tech	W	27-21
Sept. 25	at Oklahoma	L	13-16
Oct. 2	Texas Tech	L	20-23
Oct. 9	at Baylor	L	20-45
Oct. 23	at TCU	W	29-17
Oct. 30	Iowa State	W	38-31
Nov. 6	Oklahoma State	L	3-24
Nov. 13	at Kansas State	L	17-34
Nov. 20	Texas	W	31-23
Nov. 27	at Kansas	W	34-28
Dec. 28	vs. Minnesota #	L	6-18

#Guaranteed Rate Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	BIG 12	NATIONAL
Scoring	25.2 ppg	9	88
Rushing	123.4 ypg	10	102
Passing	247.9 ypg	4	56
Total	371.3 ypg	8	88

DEFENSE	PER GAME	BIG 12	NATIONAL
Scoring	23.8 ppg	5	45
Rushing	138.5 ypg	7	42
Passing	211.5 ypg	3	39
Total	350.1 ypg	5	37

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	BIG 12	NATIONAL
-5	-0.38	10	97

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	25.6	124
Defense	32.3	118
Margin	-6.6	127
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	44.0%	57
Defense	42.6%	66
Margin	+1.4%	62
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	5.5	90
Defense	5.7	69
Margin	-0.2	86
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.3	49
Defense	3.5	26
Margin	+0.8	19
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	-4.9	121
Actual	-7	107
Margin	-2.1	86

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

0.022

West Virginia's offense struggled to maintain consistency in 2021, averaging 0.022 EPA/play. The Mountaineers generated quality possessions at a 43.2 percent rate, 90th in the nation.

53

West Virginia ranked ninth in the Big 12 in rushing plays gaining 10 yards or more, with 53. In the conference, only Kansas produced fewer such plays.

3.78

The Mountaineers allowed just 3.78 points per quality possession (12th best in the FBS), holding opponents to field goal attempts on 36.8 percent of all quality possessions.

DEFENSE Similarly to the offense, the defensive line returns a boatload of experience, led by Dante Stills, who decided to use his extra year of eligibility to return. Taijh Alston is another veteran on the edge. There are talented players waiting in the wings as well to provide depth.

At linebacker, Syracuse transfer Lee Kpogba will man the Mike, while Lance Dixon and Exree Loe return at the Will spot. The coaches hope that the Bandit position will evolve with Jared Bartlett and Lanell Carr playing as both an extra rusher and pass defender.

The secondary was devastated with transfers and eligibility exhaustion, so there will be new faces at every position but one. Corner Charles Woods started toward the end of last season and played well down the stretch, and expect Andrew Wilson-Lamp, Naim Muhammad, Mumu Bin-Wahad and Murray State transfer Marcis Floyd to get a chance opposite Woods. Brown says he will also look at the portal to add depth.

North Dakota State transfer Jasir Cox and redshirt freshman Davis Mallinger are the favorites at the Spear safety, while sophomores Aubrey Burks, Hershey McLaurin and Saint McLeod will fill the other spots.

SPECIALISTS Casey Legg is back at kicker after making 19-of-23 field goals last season, and Florida State transfer Parker Grothaus will take over kickoff duties. Australian freshman Oliver Straw will likely handle the punting duties.

At kick returner, Aaron was an All-America returner in junior college, but James and Anderson could handle the duties, and the same can be said for punt returns.

FINAL ANALYSIS It will be a brand-new look offensively this season, but that isn't necessarily a bad thing. With Harrell able to put his stamp on things, there could be a chance for some excitement, and that will require young players to grow into their roles quickly.

Although he defense has been hit hard with attrition, there are still high-caliber pieces, especially up front. The Mountaineers need to establish a pass rush, something they struggled with last season, with few proven commodities in the defensive backfield.

A reboot, so to speak, can finally make this Brown's team and program, but things could also turn south in a hurry.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	**0**	**Bryce Ford-Wheaton (Jr.)**	3	Kaden Prather (So.)
WR	13	Sam James (Sr.)	18	Jarel Williams (Fr.)
WR	15	Reese Smith (So.)		Cortez Braham (Jr.)
LT	**64**	**Wyatt Milum (So.)**	58	Nick Malone (Jr.)
LG	**74**	**James Gmiter (Sr.)**	73	Chris Mayo (So.)
C	**54**	**Zach Frazier (Jr.)**	53	Jordan White (So.)
RG	**72**	**Doug Nester (Jr.)**	53	Jordan White (So.)
RT	**50**	**Brandon Yates (Jr.)**	66	Ja'Quay Hubbard (Jr.)
TE	87	Mike O'Laughlin (Jr.)	88	Brian Polendey (Sr.)
QB	18	JT Daniels (Jr.)	7	Will Crowder (Fr.)
RB	24	Tony Mathis Jr. (Jr.)	17	Lyn-J Dixon (Sr.)

DEFENSE (3)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	**12**	**Taijh Alston (Sr.)**	45	Taurus Simmons (So.)
NT	95	Jordan Jefferson (Jr.)	91	Sean Martin (So.)
DT	**55**	**Dante Stills (Sr.)**	52	Jalen Thornton (Jr.)
MLB	8	Lee Kpogba (Jr.)	23	Ja'Corey Hammett (Fr.)
WLB	5	Lance Dixon (Jr.)	**6**	**Exree Loe (Sr.)**
BAN	10	Jared Bartlett (Jr.)	44	Lanell Carr (So.)
CB	23	Charles Woods (Sr.)	20	Andrew Wilson-Lamp (Fr.)
CB	30	Naim Muhammad (Jr.)	24	Marcis Floyd (Jr.)
SPEAR	27	Davis Mallinger (Fr.)		Jasir Cox (Sr.)
CAT	22	Aubrey Burks (So.)	25	Saint McLeod (So.)
FS	13	Hershey McLaurin (So.)	16	Caleb Coleman (Fr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	48	Casey Legg (Sr.)	KR		Jeremiah Aaron (Jr.)
P	41	Oliver Straw (Fr.)	PR		Jeremiah Aaron (Jr.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Jarret Doege	417	272	3,048	19	12
Garrett Greene	**26**	**16**	**147**	**0**	**0**
Will Crowder	**2**	**2**	**28**	**0**	**0**
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Leddie Brown	223	1,065	4.8	13	
Tony Mathis Jr.	**72**	**312**	**4.3**	**0**	
Garrett Greene	**48**	**297**	**6.2**	**4**	
Justin Johnson Jr.	**24**	**90**	**3.8**	**0**	
Sam James	**2**	**9**	**4.5**	**0**	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Winston Wright Jr.	63	688	10.9	5	
Sam James	**42**	**505**	**12.0**	**5**	
Bryce Ford-Wheaton	**42**	**575**	**13.7**	**3**	
Leddie Brown	36	217	6.0	1	
Isaiah Esdale	29	362	12.5	1	

KICKING: **Casey Legg, 19-23 FGs, 92 pts.**
TACKLES: Josh Chandler-Semedo, 110; Sean Mahone, 81
SACKS: **Dante Stills, 7.0**
INTERCEPTIONS: 3 players tied with 2

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE MOUNTAINEERS

Opposing Coaches Size Up West Virginia

"Defensively, they're going to be fine. They're going to stand out in the [Big 12] by being different, and they do a pretty good job of it. It's the same four- and three-down stuff, but they structure it to where other teams in the league don't see it week to week, stuff like light boxes that can still stop the run. The movement up front helps them a lot. … The overall strengths will be both lines, and usually when you have good play there you're going to be good, or at least reliable. They've been rebuilding that OL from the ground up since they got there, and there's some more transfers coming in. They actually might have one of the best receiving corps in the Big 12 even with the transfers out, but they have to find the right quarterback situation. … It all comes down to JT Daniels at quarterback, and Graham [Harrell] has shown at USC he can get a lot out of his guys. Also, they've got a strong OL core and good receivers, so that helps. … It's really the Neal Brown program now. I don't know if there are two more different coaches and culture than him and Dana Holgorsen, and it's hard to make that transition when players expect one totally different experience and get another. This will be the first year where they can potentially make a big enough statement on the field to build some momentum off of it."

BIG TEN PREVIEW

EAST DIVISION
PREDICTED ORDER OF FINISH

1	OHIO STATE **BUCKEYES**	12-1, 8-1
2	MICHIGAN **WOLVERINES**	10-2, 7-2
3	MICHIGAN STATE **SPARTANS**	9-3, 6-3
4	PENN STATE **NITTANY LIONS**	8-4, 6-3
5	MARYLAND **TERRAPINS**	6-6, 3-6
6	RUTGERS **SCARLET KNIGHTS**	4-8, 2-7
7	INDIANA **HOOSIERS**	4-8, 2-7

WEST DIVISION
PREDICTED ORDER OF FINISH

1	WISCONSIN **BADGERS**	9-4, 6-3
2	PURDUE **BOILERMAKERS**	8-4, 6-3
3	IOWA **HAWKEYES**	8-4, 5-4
4	MINNESOTA **GOLDEN GOPHERS**	7-5, 4-5
5	NEBRASKA **CORNHUSKERS**	6-6, 4-5
6	ILLINOIS **FIGHTING ILLINI**	6-6, 3-6
7	NORTHWESTERN **WILDCATS**	4-8, 1-8

Games to Watch

Nebraska vs. Northwestern (Dublin), Aug. 27
Notre Dame at Ohio State, Sept. 3
Penn State at Auburn, Sept. 17
Wisconsin at Ohio State, Sept. 24
Michigan at Iowa, Oct. 1
Penn State at Michigan, Oct. 15
Purdue at Wisconsin, Oct. 22
Michigan State at Michigan, Oct. 29
Ohio State at Penn State, Oct. 29
Nebraska at Iowa, Nov. 25
Michigan at Ohio State, Nov. 26
Minnesota at Wisconsin, Nov. 26

JAXON SMITH-NJIGBA

Joe Robbins

Big Ten Championship:
Ohio State over Wisconsin

Recruiting by School

1. Ohio State
2. Penn State
3. Michigan
4. Michigan State
5. Indiana
6. Iowa
7. Maryland
8. Rutgers
9. Purdue
10. Nebraska
11. Wisconsin
12. Illinois
13. Northwestern
14. Minnesota

ALL-BIG TEN TEAM

FIRST-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	**C.J. Stroud**	So.	Ohio State
RB	**Braelon Allen**	So.	Wisconsin
RB	**TreVeyon Henderson**	So.	Ohio State
AP	**Blake Corum**	Jr.	Michigan
WR	**Jaxon Smith-Njigba**	Jr.	Ohio State
WR	**Jayden Reed**	Sr.	Michigan State
TE	**Sam LaPorta**	Sr.	Iowa
C	**John Michael Schmitz**	Sr.	Minnesota
OL	**Paris Johnson Jr.**	Jr.	Ohio State
OL	**Peter Skoronski**	Jr.	Northwestern
OL	**Dawand Jones**	Sr.	Ohio State
OL	**Ryan Hayes**	Sr.	Michigan

FIRST-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	**Zach Harrison**	Sr.	Ohio State
DL	**Mazi Smith**	Sr.	Michigan
DL	**PJ Mustipher**	Sr.	Penn State
DL	**Jacob Slade**	Sr.	Michigan State
DL	**Keeanu Benton**	Sr.	Wisconsin
LB	**Jack Campbell**	Sr.	Iowa
LB	**Nick Herbig**	Jr.	Wisconsin
LB	**Garrett Nelson**	Jr.	Nebraska
CB	**Denzel Burke**	So.	Ohio State
CB	**Riley Moss**	Sr.	Iowa
S	**Ronnie Hickman**	Jr.	Ohio State
S	**Ji’Ayir Brown**	Sr.	Penn State

FIRST-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	**Jake Moody**	Sr.	Michigan
KR	**Charlie Jones**	Sr.	Iowa
P	**Adam Korsak**	Sr.	Rutgers
PR	**Jayden Reed**	Sr.	Michigan State

SECOND-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	**Aidan O’Connell**	Sr.	Purdue
RB	**Chase Brown**	Jr.	Illinois
RB	**Mohamed Ibrahim**	Sr.	Minnesota
AP	**Donovan Edwards**	So.	Michigan
WR	**Marvin Harrison Jr.**	So.	Ohio State
WR	**Rakim Jarrett**	Jr.	Maryland
TE	**Payne Durham**	Sr.	Purdue
C	**Olusegun Oluwatimi**	Sr.	Michigan
OL	**J.D. Duplain**	Sr.	Michigan State
OL	**Jaelyn Duncan**	Sr.	Maryland
OL	**Joe Tippmann**	Jr.	Wisconsin
OL	**Zak Zinter**	Jr.	Michigan

SECOND-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	**Ochaun Mathis**	Sr.	Nebraska
DL	**Jack Sawyer**	So.	Ohio State
DL	**Adetomiwa Adebawore**	Sr.	Northwestern
DL	**Branson Deen**	Sr.	Purdue
DL	**Logan Lee**	Jr.	Iowa
LB	**Seth Benson**	Sr.	Iowa
LB	**Curtis Jacobs**	So.	Penn State
LB	**Cal Haladay**	So.	Michigan State
CB	**Joey Porter Jr.**	Jr.	Penn State
CB	**Tiawan Mullen**	Sr.	Indiana
S	**Xavier Henderson**	Sr.	Michigan State
S	**Sydney Brown**	Sr.	Illinois

SECOND-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	**Noah Ruggles**	Sr.	Ohio State
KR	**Emeka Egbuka**	So.	Ohio State
P	**Tory Taylor**	Jr.	Iowa
PR	**Charlie Jones**	Sr.	Iowa

THIRD-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	**Taulia Tagovailoa**	Jr.	Maryland
RB	**Evan Hull**	Jr.	Northwestern
RB	**Jarek Broussard**	Jr.	Michigan State
AP	**Parker Washington**	So.	Penn State
WR	**Ronnie Bell**	Sr.	Michigan
WR	**Milton Wright**	Sr.	Purdue
WR	**Dontay Demus Jr.**	Sr.	Maryland
C	**Luke Wypler**	So.	Ohio State
OL	**Trevor Keegan**	Sr.	Michigan
OL	**Juice Scruggs**	Sr.	Penn State
OL	**Tyler Beach**	Sr.	Wisconsin
OL	**Alex Palczewski**	Sr.	Illinois

THIRD-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	**Lukas Van Ness**	So.	Iowa
DL	**J.T. Tuimoloau**	So.	Ohio State
DL	**Thomas Rush**	Sr.	Minnesota
DL	**Keith Randolph Jr.**	So.	Illinois
DL	**Noah Shannon**	Sr.	Iowa
LB	**Luke Reimer**	Jr.	Nebraska
LB	**Junior Colson**	So.	Michigan
LB	**Mariano Sori-Marin**	Sr.	Minnesota
CB	**Jakorian Bennett**	Sr.	Maryland
CB	**DJ Turner**	Sr.	Michigan
S	**Tyler Nubin**	Sr.	Minnesota
S	**Avery Young**	Sr.	Rutgers

THIRD-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	**Chad Ryland**	Sr.	Maryland
KR	**Jayden Reed**	Sr.	Michigan State
P	**Bryce Baringer**	Sr.	Michigan State
PR	**Aron Cruickshank**	Sr.	Rutgers

2022 BOWL PROJECTIONS

Birmingham Bowl
Maryland vs. Mississippi State
Citrus Bowl
Wisconsin vs. Tennessee
Duke’s Mayo Bowl
Penn State vs. Florida State
Guaranteed Rate Bowl
Nebraska vs. Kansas State
Music City Bowl
Iowa vs. Arkansas
Pinstripe Bowl
Purdue vs. North Carolina
Quick Lane Bowl
Minnesota vs. Central Mich.
Tampa Bay Bowl
Michigan State vs. Kentucky
Rose Bowl
Michigan vs. Utah
Peach Bowl (CFP Semifinal)
Ohio State vs. Georgia

2021 STANDINGS

East	**B1G**	**Overall**
Michigan	8-1	12-2
Ohio State	8-1	11-2
Michigan State	7-2	11-1
Penn State	4-5	7-6
Maryland	3-6	7-6
Rutgers	2-7	5-8
Indiana	0-9	2-10
West	**B1G**	**Overall**
Iowa	7-2	10-4
Minnesota	6-3	9-4
Wisconsin	6-3	9-4
Purdue	6-3	9-4
Illinois	4-5	5-7
Nebraska	1-8	3-9
Northwestern	1-8	3-9

2021 BOWL RESULTS

Guaranteed Rate Bowl
Minnesota 18, West Virginia 6
Pinstripe Bowl
Maryland 54, Virginia Tech 10
Music City Bowl
Purdue 48, Tennessee 45 (ot)
Peach Bowl
Michigan State 31, Pittsburgh 21
Las Vegas Bowl
Wisconsin 20, Arizona State 13
Gator Bowl
Wake Forest 38, Rutgers 10
Outback Bowl
Arkansas 24, Penn State 10
Citrus Bowl
Kentucky 20, Iowa 17
Rose Bowl
Ohio State 48, Utah 45
Orange Bowl (CFP semifinal)
Georgia 34, Michigan 11

INDIANA HOOSIERS

National Forecast: 82 • Big Ten East Prediction: 7 • Projected Record: 4-8, 2-7 Big Ten

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Tom Allen
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 26-32 (5+ years)
CAREER RECORD: 26-32 (5+ years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Walt Bell
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Chad Wilt
LOCATION: Bloomington, IN
STADIUM: Memorial Stadium (52,626)

KEY HOOSIERS

CAM JONES, OLB Fifth-year player and leader who has excelled at rushing the passer and creating turnovers with five forced fumbles and two interceptions in his career.

TIAWAN MULLEN, CB Three-year starter whose coverage skills slipped last season because of injuries but still a ball hawk and sure tackler.

MATTHEW BEDFORD, LT Versatile, athletic offensive lineman whom coaches can confidently plug into every spot except center.

KEY LOSSES

MICAH MCFADDEN, LB Led the team in tackles the last three seasons while also serving as the primary coach on the field.

PEYTON HENDERSHOT, TE Tied for the team lead in receptions last season with 46 while also contributing four of the Hoosiers' nine touchdown catches.

STEPHEN CARR, RB Starting halfback who ran for 600 of IU's 1,370 yards and scored six of the Hoosiers' 13 rushing touchdowns.

RISING STAR

Although tight end **AJ BARNER** played in every game last season, his snaps were limited by Peyton Hendershot. Barner should emerge as a primary receiver. His long 6'6", 251-pound athletic frame and sure hands make him a weapon, as he showed with a 76-yard touchdown against Idaho.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Dasan McCullough, Edge, Bloomington, IN	★★★★
2	Trevell Mullen, CB, Pompano Beach, FL	★★★★
3	Nick James, DL, Bradenton, FL	★★★★
4	Omar Cooper Jr., WR, Indianapolis, IN	★★★★
5	DJ Moore, OL, Fort Wayne, IN	★★★
6	Brody Foley, TE, Cincinnati, OH	★★★
7	Venson Sneed, DL, Winter Park, FL	★★★
8	Richard Thomas Jr., DL, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	★★★
9	James Monds III, CB, Vero Beach, FL	★★★
10	Phillip Dunnam, S, Miami, FL	★★★
11	Carter Smith, OT, Powell, OH	★★★
12	Cam Camper, WR, Lancaster, TX*	★★★
13	Ryan Miller, TE, Chagrin Falls, OH	★★★
14	Jamari Sharpe, CB, Miami, FL	★★★
15	Jaylin Lucas, ATH, New Orleans, LA	★★★
16	Isaiah Jones, LB, London, OH	★★★
17	Brendan Sorsby, QB, Lake Dallas, TX	★★★
18	Bray Lynch, OT, Austin, TX	★★★
19	J'mari Monette, DL, Alexandria, LA	★★★
20	Kaiden Turner, LB, Fayetteville, AR	★★★
21	Kamryn Perry, WR, Marietta, GA	★★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite *junior college transfer

New offensive coordinator. New defensive coordinator. New quarterback. New running backs. New wide receivers. New starting middle linebacker. New almost everything.

But there is an old mission around the Indiana football program: discovering how to make Hoosiers relevant in the Big Ten East again.

After a surprising Top 25 finish in the shortened 2020 season, the Hoosiers collapsed to 2–10 last season, floundering to 0–9 in the Big Ten.

Head coach Tom Allen recruited five new assistant coaches as well 12 players from the transfer portal while trying to return IU to its winning ways of 2019 and 2020.

OFFENSE Nothing worked last season. The Hoosiers ranked last in the Big Ten in total offense, averaging fewer than 300 yards and 18 points per game. IU had four touchdown passes in nine Big Ten games.

Allen dismissed offensive coordinator Nick Sheridan, replacing him with Walt Bell, who earned a solid reputation as a play-caller at Maryland and Florida State before three tough seasons as the head coach at UMass.

The starting quarterback will be a multi-player competition in fall camp, but Missouri transfer Connor Bazelak projects as the favorite because of his performance in spring ball as well as his two seasons as a starter in the SEC. Bazelak is a career 66 percent passer but must improve his 23-to-17 touchdown-to-interception ratio. If Bell believes mobility is more important, then either Dexter Williams II or Donaven McCulley will get the call.

None of the Hoosiers' top four running backs return, but that's not as dire as it sounds because they combined for only 1,066 yards. Transfers Shaun Shivers (Auburn) and Josh Henderson (North Carolina) saw the void as an opportunity to play immediately, although neither ran for 90 yards last season.

Indiana reboots at receiver, although D.J. Matthews Jr. started four games in the slot before a knee injury ended his season. Cam Camper, a transfer from Trinity Valley (Texas) Junior College, drew consistent praise for his ability to generate yards after the catch in spring practice. Emery Simmons caught 30 passes in three seasons at North Carolina before transferring to IU, which recruited him out of high school. Jaquez Smith redshirted last season but was a four-star recruit and the second-highest-ranked player in IU's 2021 class. Tight end AJ Barner has the size, hands and speed to emerge as the top pass catcher.

The Hoosiers averaged 3.2 yards per carry and allowed 29 sacks, which is a polite way of saying the offensive line has work to do. Three starters return, but there have been multiple position shifts, as Matthew Bedford moves from left guard to left tackle, Luke Haggard from left tackle to right tackle and Zach Carpenter from right guard to center. All eyes will be on this group.

DEFENSE The Hoosiers' defensive scoring average soared from 20.3 to 33.2 points per game, which ranked

CAM JONES

Tom DiPace

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	Illinois
Sept. 10	Idaho
Sept. 17	WKU
Sept. 24	at Cincinnati
Oct. 1	at Nebraska
Oct. 8	Michigan
Oct. 15	Maryland
Oct. 22	at Rutgers
Nov. 5	Penn State
Nov. 12	at Ohio State
Nov. 19	at Michigan State
Nov. 26	Purdue

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 2-10, 0-9 BIG TEN

Sept. 4	at Iowa	L	6-34
Sept. 11	Idaho	W	56-14
Sept. 18	Cincinnati	L	24-38
Sept. 25	at WKU	W	33-31
Oct. 2	at Penn State	L	0-24
Oct. 16	Michigan State	L	15-20
Oct. 23	Ohio State	L	7-54
Oct. 30	at Maryland	L	35-38
Nov. 6	at Michigan	L	7-29
Nov. 13	Rutgers	L	3-38
Nov. 20	Minnesota	L	14-35
Nov. 27	at Purdue	L	7-44

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	B1G	NATIONAL
Scoring	17.2 ppg	13	123
Rushing	114.5 ypg	12	113
Passing	175.5 ypg	10	113
Total	290.0 ypg	14	124

DEFENSE	PER GAME	B1G	NATIONAL
Scoring	33.2 ppg	14	109
Rushing	148.9 ypg	8	60
Passing	235.7 ypg	11	76
Total	384.6 ypg	10	71

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	B1G	NATIONAL
-13	-1.08	14	128

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	25.7	123
Defense	32.5	120
Margin	-6.8	128
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	36.8%	118
Defense	46.6%	110
Margin	-9.8%	120
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	4.3	128
Defense	5.7	74
Margin	-1.4	112
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	3.6	108
Defense	4.7	116
Margin	-1.1	120
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	-6.5	129
Actual	-13	128
Margin	-6.6	120

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

4.7

Even during a down year, the Hoosiers played disciplined football in 2021. Indiana ranked 13th nationally in fewest penalties per game, averaging 4.7 flags per outing.

90.0%

Indiana surrendered 39 touchdowns and 11 field goals on 55 opponent trips to the red zone. That 90.9 opponent scoring percentage ranked 116th nationally.

77.1%

Conversely, the Hoosiers scored on only 77.1 percent of their red zone visits (107th), earning 19 touchdowns and eight field goals on 35 trips.

last in the Big Ten. Defensive coordinator Charlton Warren left for North Carolina after one season. Although Allen hired Chad Wilt from Minnesota to run the defense, Allen will be more involved in the defensive game plan and play-calling, which is his background.

IU worked the portal hard on defense, and at least three newcomers could start. The two players who excelled in spring practice were JH Tevis, a tackle who had 37 tackles while starting every game for California, and Myles Jackson, a Georgia native who spent two seasons at UCLA. Jackson has leadership skills that resulted in him being named a team captain.

The primary issue on defense will be replacing Micah McFadden, who was the Hoosiers' top tackler and coach on the field since 2019. Bradley Jennings Jr. arrives from Miami (Fla.), where he lost his starting position last year after starting all 11 games in 2020. The Hoosiers' key performer will be Cam Jones, another fifth-year player who finished third for IU with 43 tackles in 2021. Speed is Jones' calling card.

Watch freshman linebacker/edge rusher Dasan McCullough, the highest-ranked member of IU's recruiting class. Although his father, Deland, left the IU staff to become the running backs coach at Notre Dame, Dasan and his brother, Deland II, a reserve cornerback, remained with the Hoosiers.

The secondary should be the strongest unit. Tiawan Mullen and Jaylin Williams are seniors and tenacious, experienced coverage guys. Safeties Devon Matthews and Bryant Fitzgerald started multiple games last season. But the Hoosiers must improve their ball-hawking skills. Their interception total slid from 17 to five last season even though IU played four more games than in 2020.

SPECIALISTS Veteran Charles Campbell returns after making 13-of-18 field goals and all 20 extra points. IU added Alejandro Quintero from Blinn (Texas) College to push James Evans at punter. Matthews should return punts if his knee is healthy, and the same is true for David Ellis on kickoffs.

FINAL ANALYSIS The Hoosiers were outscored by nearly 25 points per game while losing all nine Big Ten games and were buried by a schedule that featured six teams ranked in the top 20 in IU's first nine games. There are so many new faces and holes to plug that even with a more favorable schedule, they'll be fortunate to double their win total to four games.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (4)				
WR	6	Cam Camper (Jr.)	19	Malachi Holt-Bennett (So.)
WR	0	Emery Simmons (Sr.)	18	Javon Swinton (Jr.)
WR	**7**	**D.J. Matthews Jr. (Sr.)**	8	Jaquez Smith (Fr.)
LT	**76**	**Matthew Bedford (Sr.)**	77	Joshua Sales Jr. (Fr.)
LG	**56**	**Mike Katic (Jr.)**	75	Luke Wiginton (So.)
C	50	Zach Carpenter (Jr.)	62	Cameron Knight (So.)
RG	53	Vinny Fiacable (Fr.)	71	Randy Holtz (So.)
RT	**70**	**Luke Haggard (Sr.)**	67	Kahlil Benson (So.)
TE	88	AJ Barner (Jr.)	84	Aaron Steinfeldt (Fr.)
QB	9	Connor Bazelak (Jr.)	1	Donaven McCulley (So.)
RB	2	Shaun Shivers (Sr.)	26	Josh Henderson (Sr.)
DEFENSE (7)				Returning Starters in **BOLD**
DE	6	James Head Jr. (Sr.)	41	Beau Robbins (Jr.)
DT	47	JH Tevis (Sr.)	**94**	**Demarcus Elliott (Sr.)**
DT	50	Sio Nofoagatoto'a (Sr.)	91	LeDarrius Cox (Jr.)
DE	10	Myles Jackson (So.)	**92**	**Alfred Bryant (Sr.)**
OLB	**4**	**Cam Jones (Sr.)**	8	Jared Casey (So.)
MLB	5	Bradley Jennings Jr. (Sr.)	46	Aaron Casey (Sr.)
OLB	21	Noah Pierre (Sr.)		Dasan McCullough (Fr.)
CB	**3**	**Tiawan Mullen (Sr.)**	7	Christopher Keys (So.)
CB	**23**	**Jaylin Williams (Sr.)**	2	James Monds III (Fr.)
S	**1**	**Devon Matthews (Sr.)**	19	Josh Sanguinetti (Jr.)
S	**31**	**Bryant Fitzgerald (Sr.)**	17	Jonathan Haynes (Sr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	93	Charles Campbell (Sr.)	KR	10	David Ellis (Sr.)
P	94	James Evans (So.)	PR	7	D.J. Matthews Jr. (Sr.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	**ATT**	**COMP**	**YDS**	**TD**	**INT**
Michael Penix Jr.	162	87	939	4	7
Donaven McCulley	**82**	**35**	**475**	**2**	**2**
Jack Tuttle	**87**	**45**	**423**	**2**	**5**
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Stephen Carr	155	600	3.9	6	
Davion Ervin-Poindexter	44	227	5.1	1	
Chris Childers	37	137	3.7	1	
Donaven McCulley	**64**	**135**	**2.1**	**2**	
Tim Baldwin Jr.	28	103	3.7	0	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Peyton Hendershot	46	543	11.8	4	
Ty Fryfogle	46	512	11.1	1	
Miles Marshall	22	311	14.1	0	
Javon Swinton	**15**	**115**	**7.7**	**1**	
Stephen Carr	15	93	6.2	1	

KICKING: **Charles Campbell, 13-18 FGs, 59 pts.**
TACKLES: Micah McFadden, 77; Raheem Layne, 65
SACKS: Micah McFadden, 6.5
INTERCEPTIONS: 5 players tied with 1

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE HOOSIERS

Opposing Coaches Size Up Indiana

"Big questions here. They're coming off a season that was underwhelming, but I think you also saw a lot of challenges to what we thought Tom [Allen] had succeeded in putting in place. … As the season went on, you could see their players were frustrated; you could literally see it on the film. They didn't necessarily quit, but you could say the frustration was causing a lot of issues. … The Missouri kid [Connor Bazelak] is it for them. If he can get things going, if they can find some help on the outside and he gets something going with his receivers, they can bounce back. The back from Auburn [Shaun Shivers] is a big get for them; he can help them get creative with scheme. … They need the defense to carry it for a bit. But they had some guys transfer out and lost some guys up front, and that's where they really struggled. [Micah] McFadden was a stud; they're going to miss him. … This is the season where we're all going to find out if this program can win sustainably. Can they develop talent, can they fill holes on the roster without leaning on the portal, all that. Tom had an amazing 2020 in a weird season, but now it's a test of how good all your fundamentals as a program manager are. You can explain away a lot of their 2020, and you can explain away a lot of their 2021. But as long as they're relatively healthy, this is the season we find out about these guys."

MARYLAND TERRAPINS

National Forecast: 58 • Big Ten East Prediction: 5 • Projected Record: 6-6, 3-6 Big Ten

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Mike Locksley
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 13-23 (3+ years)
CAREER RECORD: 15-49 (5+ years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Dan Enos
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Brian Williams
LOCATION: College Park, MD
STADIUM: Maryland Stadium (51,802)

KEY TERRAPINS

TAULIA TAGOVAILOA, QB Coming off record-breaking season, Tagovailoa is Maryland's reason for hope in the unforgiving Big Ten East.

JAELYN DUNCAN, LT Duncan has been opening eyes and holes as an all-conference honorable mention pick the last two years.

DEONTE BANKS, CB The underrated Banks has proven himself the top cover corner in the program when healthy, and he should be primed for a breakout season.

KEY LOSSES

SAM OKUAYINONU, DE Started every game the last two years and emerged as a stalwart, leading the Terps with six sacks and earning All-Big Ten honors in 2021.

CHIGOZIEM OKONKWO, TE Blossomed into an All-Big Ten-caliber tight end as a senior, leading the league in receptions in conference games, including 12 against Penn State.

NICK CROSS, FS The hard-hitting safety with a penchant for the big play had three interceptions and was second on the team with 67 tackles, including three sacks.

RISING STAR

Tight end **COREY DYCHES**, a converted wideout, caught 19 passes, caddying for breakout star Chigoziem Okonkwo. Now Dyches' stock should soar like Okonkwo's did. The 6'2", 220-pound Dyches perhaps provided a preview in the regular-season finale vs. Rutgers with two TD catches.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Jaishawn Barham, LB, Baltimore, MD	★★★★
2	Shaleak Knotts, WR, Monroe, NC	★★★★
3	Ramon Brown, RB, Midlothian, VA	★★★★
4	Octavian Smith Jr., ATH, Burtonsville, MD	★★★★
5	Preston Howard, ATH, Owings Mills, MD	★★★
6	Cameron Edge, QB, Smyrna, DE	★★★
7	Andre Roye Jr., OT, Baltimore MD	★★★
8	Daniel Owens, DL, Towson, MD	★★★
9	Jayden Sauray, QB, Upper Marlboro, MD	★★★
10	Perry Fisher, ATH, Tallahassee, FL	★★★
11	Leon Haughton Jr., WR, Richmond, VA	★★★
12	Caleb Wheatland, LB, Chantilly, VA	★★★
13	Gavin Gibson, S, Cornelius, NC	★★★
14	Lionell Whitaker, CB, Tallahassee, FL	★★★
15	Kellan Wyatt, LB, Severn, MD	★★★
16	Coltin Deery, OL, Malvern, PA	★★★
17	Ja'Kavion Nonar, OT, Belle Glade, FL	★★★
18	Lavain Scruggs, ATH, Severn, MD	★★★
19	Keon Kindred, OT, Belle Glade, FL	★★★
20	Liridon Mujezinovic, OT, The Netherlands*	★★★
21	Maximus McCree, OT, Grandview, MO*	★★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite *junior college transfer

What's that strange sound you hear around Maryland football as the 2022 season nears? It's hope. The Terrapins just appeared in their first bowl game in six years and posted their first winning record since 2014. Fourth-year head coach Mike Locksley has been stacking up solid recruiting classes, and there's a legitimate quarterback at the helm.

Maryland hasn't won more than three conference games since that first Big Ten season in 2014, but the Terps are closer to stopping B1G bullies from kicking sand in their face. They're not there yet — some offseason setbacks on defense have slowed the process — but there is QB Taulia Tagovailoa, an amazing array of receivers and some experience on the offensive line. Of course, there's also — stop us if you've heard this before — a rebuilding defense.

The ever-optimistic Locksley, a local with red, black and gold running through his veins, is feeling good enough about things to admit, "We have a great deal of talent on this roster. We embrace any expectations that we've created for ourselves."

OFFENSE That embracing centers around Tagovailoa creating plays and opportunities. He set Maryland single-season records for passing yards (3,860), completions (328), completion percentage (69.2), passing touchdowns (26), and 300-yard passing games (seven). He was MVP of the New Era Pinstripe Bowl with a 20-of-24 passing performance for 265 yards and two scores and rushing for another 42 yards, something else he can do.

Tagovailoa had 11 interceptions, but five of them came in a dismal loss to Iowa, and he threw just three picks in the final seven games. His emergence under coordinator/QB coach Dan Enos was striking, as he gave the Terps quick-strike potential. He provides a cause for optimism.

Now figure in a wide receiver meeting room where anything that falls off a desk is caught. Rakim Jarrett is a speedy, sure-handed threat who led Maryland with 62 receptions, 829 yards and five touchdowns. He's rejoined by senior Dontay Demus Jr., lost for the last seven games of 2021 with a knee injury. He was tops in the Big Ten and 11th nationally in receiving yards at the time. He's a key piece, a big (6'4", 215) target. Florida transfer Jacob Copeland, the Gators' leading receiver, was impressive this spring. Corey Dyches looks ready to emerge as a difference-making tight end.

Lightly used Colby McDonald (60 carries for a 5.4-yard average) and bruising, 225-pound Challen Faamatau are the top returning running backs, but count on true freshman Ramon Brown, a four-star prospect out of Midlothian, Va., to earn a spot.

Jaelyn Duncan anchors a veteran line that has four starters back. Line coach Brian Braswell made some moves this spring, showcasing the line's versatility. Veterans Johari Branch, Spencer Anderson and Delmar Glaze are all in new positions.

DEFENSE Brian Williams becomes Maryland's fourth defensive coordinator since 2019 (if you count Kevin Steele, who was in town for a week before heading to

TAULIA TAGOVAILOA

Joe Robbins

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Buffalo
Sept. 10	at Charlotte
Sept. 17	SMU
Sept. 24	at Michigan
Oct. 1	Michigan State
Oct. 8	Purdue
Oct. 15	at Indiana
Oct. 22	Northwestern
Nov. 5	at Wisconsin
Nov. 12	at Penn State
Nov. 19	Ohio State
Nov. 26	Rutgers

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 7-6, 3-6 BIG TEN

Sept. 4	West Virginia	W	30-24
Sept. 11	Howard	W	62-0
Sept. 17	at Illinois	W	20-17
Sept. 25	Kent State	W	37-16
Oct. 1	Iowa	L	14-51
Oct. 9	at Ohio State	L	17-66
Oct. 23	at Minnesota	L	16-34
Oct. 30	Indiana	W	38-35
Nov. 6	Penn State	L	14-31
Nov. 13	at Michigan State	L	21-40
Nov. 20	Michigan	L	18-59
Nov. 27	at Rutgers	W	40-16
Dec. 29	vs. Virginia Tech #	W	54-10

#Pinstripe Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	B1G	NATIONAL
Scoring	29.3 ppg	4	57
Rushing	136.4 ypg	10	91
Passing	304.6 ypg	3	13
Total	441.0 ypg	4	32
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**B1G**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	30.7 ppg	13	98
Rushing	154.8 ypg	11	70
Passing	249.5 ypg	13	99
Total	404.3 ypg	12	85
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**B1G**	**NATIONAL**
-6	-0.46	12	104

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	26.6	113
Defense	31.3	106
Margin	-4.7	116
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	48.0%	18
Defense	44.4%	92
Margin	+3.6%	46
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	6.3	44
Defense	5.8	78
Margin	+0.5	58
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.2	65
Defense	4.1	60
Margin	+0.1	72
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	-0.3	76
Actual	-7	107
Margin	-6.7	121

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

-10.3%

Maryland rushed 10.3 percent less often than the average team last season, ranking 120th in the nation.

46.2%

Maryland was successful on 46.2 percent of passes in 2021, propelling UM to a ranking of 10th in efficiency. The Terrapins were particularly effective on early downs, ranking 17th in EPA/play on first and second downs (0.116).

0.147

The Maryland pass defense ranked 99th in explosiveness in 2021, allowing 0.147 EPA/pass. Opponents averaged a 41.3 percent passing success rate against the Terrapins.

Miami in February). Williams had on-the-job training, taking over play-calling from Brian Stewart after Michigan rang up 59 points on the Terps. Williams' defense held Big Ten-challenged Rutgers to just 16 points as Maryland wrapped up a bowl appearance, and then his unit dispatched depleted Virginia Tech in the Terps' first bowl win since 2010.

Top cover corner Deonte Banks is back along with starters Jakorian Bennett and nickel Tarheeb Still. The front seven took a hit with the transfer of three top 2021 recruits: defensive end/LB Demeioun Robinson and linebackers Terrence Lewis and Branden Jennings. Middle linebacker Ruben Hyppolite II has moved to the outside, where his speed and size will help. West Virginia transfer Vandarius Cowan and four-star freshman Jaishawn Barham are newcomers ready to make an immediate impact.

Up front, veterans Ami Finau and Mosiah Nasili-Kite had 21 starts between them, and Darrell Jackson Jr. came on so strong that he started the bowl game. The whole unit could get a boost if oft-injured hybrid end Durell Nchami, a big play waiting to happen, can stay on the field. Keep an eye on Greg China-Rose, too. He needs to play somewhere.

SPECIALISTS Eastern Michigan transfer Chad Ryland provides a serious upgrade at kicker after hitting 19-of-22 field goals last season. He brings a current streak of 17 made in a row with him. Punters Colton Spangler and Anthony Pecorella split that job. Spangler's 45.5-yard average was a program record, and Pecorella pinned foes inside the 20 11 times.

FINAL ANALYSIS The extra practice time that Maryland earned for the Pinstripe Bowl is a boon to a building program. It put Locksley's lads ahead going into the spring. There's a little more confidence among the returnees and a belief that the Terrapins can continue their climb.

Some changes on the staff, particularly on defense and with new special teams coach James Thomas Jr., have created more energy and may offer needed new looks as Maryland continues to maybe move up in the Big Ten. The Terrapins are determined to see just how high they can rise. That ascension centers around the talented Tagovailoa, the O-line and a scary-good receiving corps. Maryland will go as far as Tagovailoa's arm and legs carry them. It would be nice if he didn't have to put up 40 points per game to win.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)

WR	2	Jacob Copeland (Jr.)		Shaleak Knotts (Fr.)
WR	**5**	**Rakim Jarrett (Jr.)**	6	Jeshaun Jones (Sr.)
WR	**7**	**Dontay Demus Jr. (Sr.)**	10	Tai Felton (So.)
LT	**71**	**Jaelyn Duncan (Sr.)**	55	Andre Roye Jr. (Fr.)
LG	**78**	**Mason Lunsford (Jr.)**	64	Marcus Finger (Jr.)
C	**65**	**Johari Branch (Sr.)**	**66**	**Aric Harris (Jr.)**
RG	74	Delmar Glaze (So.)	70	Amelio Moran (Sr.)
RT	**54**	**Spencer Anderson (Sr.)**	77	Maximus McCree (So.)
TE	84	Corey Dyches (So.)	18	CJ Dippre (So.)
QB	**3**	**Taulia Tagovailoa (Jr.)**	22	Eric Najarian (Jr.)
RB		Ramon Brown (Fr.)	23	Colby McDonald (So.)

DEFENSE (7)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	5	Darrell Jackson Jr. (So.)	**0**	**Greg China-Rose (Sr.)**
NT	**54**	**Ami Finau (Sr.)**	88	Anthony Booker Jr. (Jr.)
DT	**33**	**Mosiah Nasili-Kite (Sr.)**	57	Isaac Bunyun (So.)
JACK	30	Durell Nchami (Sr.)	10	Tyler Baylor (Sr.)
SLB	48	Terrance Butler Jr. (Fr.)	8	Vandarius Cowan (Sr.)
MLB	9	Fa'Najae Gotay (Sr.)	1	Jaishawn Barham (Fr.)
WLB	**11**	**Ruben Hyppolite II (Jr.)**	19	Ahmad McCullough (Sr.)
CB	**3**	**Deonte Banks (Jr.)**	**4**	**Tarheeb Still (Jr.)**
CB	**2**	**Jakorian Bennett (Sr.)**	6	Corey Coley Jr. (So.)
SS	25	Beau Brade (Jr.)	14	Isaiah Hazel (Sr.)
FS	12	Dante Trader Jr. (So.)	13	Glendon Miller (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	38	Chad Ryland (Sr.)	**KR**	4	Roman Hemby (Fr.)
P	99	Colton Spangler (Sr.)	**PR**	4	Tarheeb Still (Jr.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Taulia Tagovailoa	**474**	**328**	**3,860**	**26**	**11**
Reece Udinski	15	11	100	1	1
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Tayon Fleet-Davis	128	721	5.6	8	
Colby McDonald	**60**	**325**	**5.4**	**2**	
Challen Faamatau	**56**	**235**	**4.2**	**3**	
Peny Boone	39	172	4.4	2	
Isaiah Jacobs	28	116	4.1	0	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Rakim Jarrett	**62**	**829**	**13.4**	**5**	
Chigoziem Okonkwo	52	447	8.6	5	
Tayon Fleet-Davis	32	305	9.5	1	
Dontay Demus Jr.	**28**	**507**	**18.1**	**3**	
Brian Cobbs	25	341	13.6	1	

KICKING: Joseph Petrino, 13-20 FGs, 78 pts.
TACKLES: Jordan Mosley, 83; Nick Cross, 67
SACKS: Sam Okuayinonu, 6.0
INTERCEPTIONS: **Jakorian Bennett, 3;** Nick Cross, 3

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE TERRAPINS

Opposing Coaches Size Up Maryland

"When you talk about the portal, this was a program we figured would benefit from how Mike [Locksley] works in recruiting. They're a staff that's aggressive; they go out headhunting for big talent and fit what they do to their personnel, and that's probably not as popular a method in this league. But they've been killed in the offseason by defensive transfers, and that's the side of the ball where the questions are. … Taulia [Tagovailoa] is a star. Does he have a next gear? Can he be a legit superstar? Legit superstars can slow things down. Sometimes you see his tape and he's close. Sometimes he's still playing off pure instinct. They have a lot of really good pieces around him, especially at receiver. This could be a really special year for that offense. Sometimes that talent-first mentality can bite them because they're so aggressive with their calls. It's like they're using every play-call to recruit. So they'll hit a big play, gash you for 50, and just as easily turn it over the next play. … They're going to be must-see, because you never know if they're going score 60 and win or give up that much. Locksley is fearless; you have to hand him that. They could catch some breaks and just shoot everybody out, but they have a grinding schedule, so it could just as easily fall apart on them."

MICHIGAN WOLVERINES

National Forecast: 6 • Big Ten East Prediction: 2 • Projected Record: 10-2, 7-2 Big Ten

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Jim Harbaugh
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 61-24 (7 years)
CAREER RECORD: 119-51 (14 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Matt Weiss, Sherrone Moore
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jesse Minter
LOCATION: Ann Arbor, MI
STADIUM: Michigan Stadium (107,601)

KEY WOLVERINES

CADE MCNAMARA, QB McNamara proved last fall that he could be a championship-caliber starting quarterback, throwing for 2,576 yards and 15 touchdowns.

BLAKE CORUM, RB Corum was headed for a 1,000-yard season before a high-ankle sprain limited him down the stretch.

MAZI SMITH, DT Smith returns as the anchor of a depleted defensive line and will be leaned upon for leadership and increased pass-rushing responsibilities.

KEY LOSSES

AIDAN HUTCHINSON, DE The lifeblood of the Michigan defense last year, Hutchinson led the Big Ten in sacks (14) and finished second in Heisman Trophy voting.

DAVID OJABO, OLB Provided additional pressure and helped form one of the most feared duos in the country with Hutchinson.

DAXTON HILL, S Hill was Michigan's do-it-all defensive back, lining up at safety or in the slot to help defend an opponent's best receiver.

RISING STAR

Linebacker **JUNIOR COLSON** started seven games as a true freshman and finished fourth on the team in tackles (60), never relinquishing his role and impressing along the way. He's primed for a starting role and a breakout season.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Will Johnson, CB, Grosse Pointe, MI	★★★★★
2	Derrick Moore, DL, Baltimore, MD	★★★★
3	Keon Sabb, S, Bradenton, FL	★★★★
4	Tyler Morris, WR, La Grange Park, IL	★★★★
5	Darrius Clemons, WR, Portland, OR	★★★★
6	Zeke Berry, S, Concord, CA	★★★★
7	Jimmy Rolder, LB, Chicago, IL	★★★★
8	Mason Graham, DL, Anaheim, CA	★★★★
9	Colston Loveland, TE, Gooding, ID	★★★★
10	Kody Jones, ATH, Germantown, TN	★★★★
11	Alex Orji, QB, Sachse, TX	★★★
12	Kenneth Grant, DL, Merrillville, IN	★★★
13	Jayden Denegal, QB, Apple Valley, CA	★★★
14	Amorion Walker, WR, Ponchatoula, LA	★★★
15	Marlin Klein, TE, Rabun Gap, GA	★★★
16	Myles Pollard, CB, Brentwood, TN	★★★
17	Alessandro Lorenzetti, OT, Windsor, CT	★★★
18	Micah Pollard, LB, Jacksonville, FL	★★★
19	Damani Dent, S, Jacksonville, FL	★★★
20	CJ Stokes, RB, Columbia, SC	★★★
21	Deuce Spurlock, LB, Madison, AL	★★★
22	Connor Jones, OT, Monument, CO	★★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite

Michigan enters the 2022 season with plenty of question marks. Chief among them, of course, has to do with whether Jim Harbaugh's team can reprise last season's improbable magic act, which included a long-awaited victory over Ohio State, a Big Ten championship and a College Football Playoff berth.

There were a lot of hurdles cleared last fall. But with a pair of super-talented edge rushers gone and some holes to fill on the defensive side of the ball, what can the Wolverines muster for a sequel?

OFFENSE This unit is posed to be highly productive again this fall, whether Cade McNamara wins the starting quarterback job again or J.J. McCarthy gets the nod. Either player is capable (and it's very possible we'll see some of both), and the starter will have plenty of weapons around him to execute Michigan's plan under new coordinators Matt Weiss and Sherrone Moore, in for the departed Josh Gattis (hired by Mario Cristobal at Miami). McNamara gives the Wolverines a proven leader, one who can operate the offense efficiently and win games. McCarthy, who was sidelined much of spring with a shoulder injury, has the stronger arm and greater playmaking ability.

While the Wolverines lose two starters along their Joe Moore Award-winning offensive line, there are many familiar faces returning up front. Two-year starting left tackle Ryan Hayes is back, as is the experienced Zak Zinter at right guard, while Trevor Keegan will finally get his shot at left guard. Sixth-year graduate transfer Olusegun Oluwatimi, a Rimington Trophy finalist last year, is expected to anchor the group at center. As long as they can stay healthy, don't expect much (if any) drop-off from this group.

In the backfield, running back Blake Corum returns after falling just short of 1,000 yards rushing last fall. He was hampered by a high-ankle sprain down the stretch, limiting his carries and impact. But he's expected to get the bulk of the carries.

Outside, Michigan gets its top receiver back in Ronnie Bell, who was sidelined with an ACL injury in Week 1 last season. He brings plenty of experience to the receiver room, a fairly young and inexperienced group led by Cornelius Johnson (40 catches, 627 yards, three TDs). Mike Sainristil, Andrel Anthony and Roman Wilson will be called upon to step up, in addition to a trio of freshmen wideouts whom the Michigan coaching staff really, really likes.

DEFENSE Michigan has its third defensive coordinator in as many years in Jesse Minter, who takes over for the departed Mike Macdonald, now the defensive coordinator for Harbaugh's brother John with the Baltimore Ravens. And while there's a new coordinator in town, Minter is calling this "Year 2" of the scheme. Expect more odd-man fronts, foreign blitz concepts and dime packages in the backfield. This year, however, the personnel is a bit different. Michigan must replace Heisman Trophy

CADE MCNAMARA

Tom DiPace

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Colorado State
Sept. 10	Hawaii
Sept. 17	UConn
Sept. 24	Maryland
Oct. 1	at Iowa
Oct. 8	at Indiana
Oct. 15	Penn State
Oct. 29	Michigan State
Nov. 5	at Rutgers
Nov. 12	Nebraska
Nov. 19	Illinois
Nov. 26	at Ohio State

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 12-2, 8-1 BIG TEN

Sept. 4	Western Michigan	W	47-14
Sept. 11	Washington	W	31-10
Sept. 18	Northern Illinois	W	63-10
Sept. 25	Rutgers	W	20-13
Oct. 2	at Wisconsin	W	38-17
Oct. 9	at Nebraska	W	32-29
Oct. 23	Northwestern	W	33-7
Oct. 30	at Michigan State	L	33-37
Nov. 6	Indiana	W	29-7
Nov. 13	at Penn State	W	21-17
Nov. 20	at Maryland	W	59-18
Nov. 27	Ohio State	W	42-27
Dec. 4	vs. Iowa #	W	42-3
Dec. 31	vs. Georgia %	L	11-34

#Indianapolis %Orange Bowl: CFB Playoff Semifinal

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	B1G	NATIONAL
Scoring	35.8 ppg	2	16
Rushing	214.4 ypg	1	15
Passing	228.7 ypg	7	68
Total	443.1 ypg	3	25
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**B1G**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	17.4 ppg	4	8
Rushing	126.4 ypg	5	27
Passing	204.4 ypg	4	27
Total	330.8 ypg	4	20
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**B1G**	**NATIONAL**
+2	+0.14	8	60

finalist Aidan Hutchinson and All-Big Ten edge rusher David Ojabo, and the Wolverines will turn to a trio of players on the outside (Mike Morris, Taylor Upshaw, Jaylen Harrell) for production, along with some help inside. Look for plenty of rotations early to find the best combinations, a tall task compared to a year ago when the coaching staff knew precisely what it had. This year, the front is thin inside and inexperienced on the edge.

It's a different story at linebacker, where Junior Colson and Nikhai Hill-Green both saw extensive playing time last fall and are expected to slide into starting roles. Colson has been the talk of the staff for two years now and will be a player to watch.

The backfield must replace three starters, including do-it-all safety Daxton Hill, but it appears to have found an answer at nickel with converted receiver Mike Sainristil. DJ Turner and Gemon Green are front-runners to start at corner, while two underclassmen (Rod Moore, R.J. Moten) are ready to step in at safety after learning on the job in 2021.

SPECIALISTS Special teams was another strength for Michigan last year, and kicker Jake Moody and punter Brad Robbins are both back for one more season. The only question with this group pertains to returns. A.J. Henning handled punt-return duties after Ronnie Bell was sidelined due to injury, while Blake Corum fielded a bulk of the kick returns. Don't be shocked to see Bell back there again, with someone new handling kickoffs (Anthony and Wilson are potential candidates) so Corum, the team's No. 1 back, doesn't take any extra punishment.

FINAL ANALYSIS Michigan should be much more explosive throwing the football this year, which is important because the offense will be leaned on to carry the team while the defense breaks in new pieces. They have the talent and depth up front, playmakers at running back and receiver and the winning pedigree at quarterback to make it work. But a thin defensive line remains the Wolverines' biggest liability, and an injury could spell trouble.

Luckily for Michigan, there's enough talent in the middle and on the back end to remain competitive in Big Ten play, where the Wolverines host key opponents Michigan State and Penn State and travel to Iowa for their toughest crossover game of the season. A 4-0 start to the season is likely, setting the stage for another run in the Big Ten East.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)				
WR	**6**	**Cornelius Johnson (Sr.)**	1	Andrel Anthony (So.)
WR	**8**	**Ronnie Bell (Sr.)**	5	Mike Sainristil (Sr.)
WR	14	Roman Wilson (Jr.)	3	A.J. Henning (Jr.)
LT	**76**	**Ryan Hayes (Sr.)**	79	Jeffrey Persi (Jr.)
LG	**77**	**Trevor Keegan (Sr.)**	62	Raheem Anderson (So.)
C	55	Olusegun Oluwatimi (Sr.)	51	Greg Crippen (So.)
RG	**65**	**Zak Zinter (Jr.)**	52	Karsen Barnhart (Sr.)
RT	53	Trente Jones (Sr.)	58	Giovanni El-Hadi (So.)
TE	**83**	**Erick All (Sr.)**	**86**	**Luke Schoonmaker (Sr.)**
QB	**12**	**Cade McNamara (Sr.)**	9	J.J. McCarthy (So.)
RB	2	Blake Corum (Jr.)	7	Donovan Edwards (So.)
DEFENSE (3)				Returning Starters in **BOLD**
DE	90	Mike Morris (Sr.)	32	Jaylen Harrell (Jr.)
DT	**58**	**Mazi Smith (Sr.)**	26	Rayshaun Benny (So.)
DT	94	Kris Jenkins (Jr.)	54	George Rooks (So.)
DE	91	Taylor Upshaw (Sr.)	17	Braiden McGregor (Jr.)
LB	**25**	**Junior Colson (So.)**	23	Michael Barrett (Sr.)
LB	41	Nikhai Hill-Green (Jr.)	20	Kalel Mullings (Jr.)
CB	22	Gemon Green (Sr.)	16	Jalen Perry (Sr.)
CB	**5**	**DJ Turner (Sr.)**	2	Will Johnson (Fr.)
NB	5	Mike Sainristil (Sr.)	2	Will Johnson (Fr.)
S	19	Rod Moore (So.)	7	Makari Paige (Jr.)
S	6	R.J. Moten (Jr.)	14	Quinten Johnson (Sr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	13	Jake Moody (Sr.)	KR	2	Blake Corum (Jr.)
P	91	Brad Robbins (Sr.)	PR	3	A.J. Henning (Jr.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Cade McNamara	327	210	2,576	15	6
J.J. McCarthy	59	34	516	5	2
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Hassan Haskins	270	1,327	4.9	20	
Blake Corum	144	952	6.6	11	
Donovan Edwards	35	174	5.0	3	
A.J. Henning	9	162	18.0	2	
J.J. McCarthy	27	124	4.6	2	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Cornelius Johnson	40	627	15.7	3	
Erick All	38	437	11.5	2	
Roman Wilson	25	420	16.8	3	
Blake Corum	24	141	5.9	1	
Mike Sainristil	22	312	14.2	2	

KICKING: **Jake Moody, 23-25 FGs, 125 pts.**
TACKLES: Josh Ross, 106; Daxton Hill, 69
SACKS: Aidan Hutchinson, 14.0
INTERCEPTIONS: Daxton Hill, 2; **DJ Turner, 2**

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE WOLVERINES

Opposing Coaches Size Up Michigan

"This was a changed program in 2021, and the results reflect that. Even before they beat OSU or won the conference, I think the coaches in the league knew it could happen. You saw a different energy here; they had more speed than in recent years, and they were still just as physical. They were violent on film. It was Michigan football. They had two good backs that got downhill, one is coming back this year, and I expect more of the same on offense. They have good tight ends, and they're still young overall on offense. The big pieces are in place on this side of the ball. We're curious how they're managing the two quarterbacks and if J.J. [McCarthy] gets more time. They both have upsides, but that's always a tricky thing to manage correctly. … Defensively, you can't just replace those edge guys. Those are NFL players, and Michigan is great, but that's not a plug-and-play situation for anybody. So the defense will have a different identity. The measure of this program is how they replace league-caliber guys who leave. How deep can you stock your roster to where you're sending these guys off and still competing close to that level? ... [DC Jesse] Minter will transition right in; I don't think you're going to see any kind of departure in terms of scheme. … What you're looking for this year is how fast they resupply. Was '21 the exception or the new rule?"

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		Rank
Offense	30.8	25
Defense	26.3	13
Margin	+4.5	13
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	46.8%	25
Defense	38.6%	23
Margin	+8.2%	17
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	6.5	23
Defense	5.0	15
Margin	+1.5	9
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.9	13
Defense	3.7	38
Margin	+1.2	6
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	2.6	33
Actual	2	52
Margin	-0.6	73

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

44.3%

The Wolverines ran the ball two percent more than the average team and averaged a 44.3 percent success rate on the ground, the 22nd-most efficient rushing game in the nation.

0.101

Michigan's offense generated 0.101 EPA/play on early downs, 23rd best in the nation. Michigan avoided third downs on 48.9 percent of its sets of downs.

40%

Michigan opponents started drives on average at their own 26.3-yard line; 40 percent of Michigan's allowed TDs came on drives starting at the opponent's own 40 yard line or better.

MICHIGAN STATE SPARTANS

National Forecast: 14 • Big Ten East Prediction: 3 • Projected Record: 9-3, 6-3 Big Ten

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Mel Tucker
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 13-7 (2 years)
CAREER RECORD: 18-14 (3 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jay Johnson
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Scottie Hazelton
LOCATION: East Lansing, MI
STADIUM: Spartan Stadium (74,866)

KEY SPARTANS

PAYTON THORNE, QB Accurate and dependable, Thorne threw for 3,233 yards last year, third most in school history.

JAYDEN REED, WR Third-team All-Big Ten receiver and second-team returner who led the conference in yards per play (18.0).

JACOB SLADE, DT Had 33 QB hurries, which led Big Ten defensive tackles and ranked No. 2 in the FBS, according to Pro Football Focus.

KEY LOSSES

KENNETH WALKER III, RB The Walter Camp National Player of the Year, Walker ranked No. 2 in the nation iwith 1,636 rushing yards and was a reliable workhorse for the Spartans all season.

JACUB PANASIUK, DE Panasiuk ranked No. 5 in the nation in QB pressures (73) and tied for fourth in QB hurries (41), according to Pro Football Focus.

MATT COGHLIN, K School record-holder for career points (376) and field goals (76) while hitting 73 percent, with three game-winners in the final seconds or overtime.

RISING STAR

At 6'4", wide receiver **KEON COLEMAN** is one of the best athletes on the team, with strong physicality, excellent straight-line speed and the ability to go high for the catch. He had seven receptions last year but is poised for a bigger splash in 2022.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Alex VanSumeren, DL, Essexville, MI	★★★★
2	Katin Houser, QB, Bellflower, CA	★★★★
3	Germie Bernard, WR, Henderson, NV	★★★★
4	Dillon Tatum, ATH, West Bloomfield, MI	★★★★
5	Jaden Mangham, ATH, Franklin, MI	★★★★
6	Antonio Gates Jr., WR, Dearborn, MI	★★★★
7	Caleb Coley, CB, Warner Robins, GA	★★★
8	Jack Nickel, TE, Alpharetta, GA	★★★
9	Malik Spencer, S, Buford, GA	★★★
10	Quavian Carter, S, Leesburg, GA	★★★
11	Gavin Broscious, OL, Goodyear, AZ	★★★
12	Tyrell Henry, WR, Roseville, MI	★★★
13	Jaron Glover, WR, Sarasota, FL	★★★
14	Chase Carter, Edge, Minneapolis, MN	★★★
15	Ade Willie, CB, Bradenton, FL	★★★
16	Malcolm Jones, S, Leesburg, GA	★★★
17	James Schott, Edge, Greenwood, IN	★★★
18	Ashton Lepo, OT, Grand Haven, MI	★★★
19	Braden Miller, OT, Aurora, CO	★★★
20	Michael Masunas, TE, Chandler, AZ	★★★
21	Kristian Phillips, OL, Conyers, GA	★★★
22	Zion Young, DL, Atlanta, GA	★★★
23	Jack Stone, K, Dallas, TX	★★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite

Michigan State heads into 2022 as one of the top curiosities in college football, with the Spartans attempting to follow up on last year's surprising 11–2 season, No. 9 national ranking and Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl victory, all of which allowed third-year coach Mel Tucker to gain traction as a rising force in the profession.

"Last year, we as a staff felt we got everything we could out of the roster," Tucker says.

Tucker is methodically upgrading Michigan State's depth, but offensive explosiveness will be down a notch with dynamic tailback Kenneth Walker III off to the NFL.

The Spartans are poised to be a factor in the Big Ten East but aren't likely to contend for the division title unless a slowly improving defense makes monstrous leaps.

OFFENSE Crafty quarterback Payton Thorne is an established winner, cool in the pocket, and he can run for tough yardage when necessary. His 27 touchdown passes a year ago set a school record, against 10 interceptions.

Jayden Reed, a 1,000-yard receiver in 2021, is a slick go-to target, especially in the red zone. Tough, reliable junior Tre Mosley has 63 career catches. Tight end transfer Daniel Barker from Illinois will add an element with 11 career TD receptions.

Jalen Berger (Wisconsin) and Jarek Broussard (Colorado) will try to follow Walker's example as impact transfers at tailback. Broussard was Pac-12 Offensive Player of the Year in 2020 and rushed for 661 yards last season for the Buffaloes.

Led by left guard J.D. Duplain and center Nick Samac, the offensive line has proven performers with starting experience at all five positions, but there are questions about durability and individual reliability. O-line coach Chris Kapilovic successfully put puzzle pieces together last year and is likely to assemble a functional unit again. But Michigan State is a year or two away from ground-and-pound dominance.

DEFENSE Michigan State faced three of the top five passing attacks in the country last year (WKU, Ohio State, Purdue) and two more in the top 13 (Miami, Maryland). That opposition, and cohesion problems in the back seven, caused Michigan State to rank dead last in the country in passing yards allowed. Michigan State was a slightly less nauseating No. 10 in the Big Ten in yards allowed per pass attempt.

Georgia cornerback transfer Ameer Speed adds a talented 6'3" frame to a solid pool of cornerbacks, with senior safety Xavier Henderson providing stability. Better play is needed at the other safety position, and it's time for junior Angelo Grose to provide it. Look for overall connectedness to improve in the secondary.

Defensive tackle is a strength, with studs Jacob Slade and Simeon Barrow providing a burly, athletic tag team.

Michigan State led the Big Ten in sacks but ranked No. 11 in third-down defense, two extremes that seem illogical together. Coaches want a more consistent pass

PAYTON THORNE

Michigan State Athletics

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	Western Michigan
Sept. 10	Akron
Sept. 17	at Washington
Sept. 24	Minnesota
Oct. 1	at Maryland
Oct. 8	Ohio State
Oct. 15	Wisconsin
Oct. 29	at Michigan
Nov. 5	at Illinois
Nov. 12	Rutgers
Nov. 19	Indiana
Nov. 26	at Penn State

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 11-2, 7-2 BIG TEN

Sept. 3	at Northwestern	W	38-21
Sept. 11	Youngstown State	W	42-14
Sept. 18	at Miami (Fla.)	W	38-17
Sept. 25	Nebraska	W	23-20
Oct. 2	WKU	W	48-31
Oct. 9	at Rutgers	W	31-13
Oct. 16	at Indiana	W	20-15
Oct. 30	Michigan	W	37-33
Nov. 6	at Purdue	L	29-40
Nov. 13	Maryland	W	40-21
Nov. 20	at Ohio State	L	7-56
Nov. 27	Penn State	W	30-27
Dec. 30	vs. Pittsburgh #	W	31-21

#Peach Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	B1G	NATIONAL
Scoring	31.8 ppg	3	38
Rushing	175.6 ypg	6	53
Passing	253.7 ypg	6	47
Total	429.3 ypg	6	42
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**B1G**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	25.3 ppg	10	54
Rushing	117.2 ypg	4	15
Passing	324.8 ypg	14	130
Total	441.9 ypg	14	111
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**B1G**	**NATIONAL**
+3	+0.23	7	46

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	28.6	75
Defense	26.8	19
Margin	+1.8	39
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	42.8%	67
Defense	44.1%	90
Margin	-1.3%	85
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	6.5	26
Defense	5.6	62
Margin	+0.9	37
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.2	56
Defense	3.5	25
Margin	+0.7	28
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	3.0	27
Actual	3	41
Margin	+0.0	65

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

-0.115

Michigan State's defense held opponents to -0.115 EPA/rush in 2021, ninth best in the country. The Spartans allowed a 37.3 percent rushing success rate, 44th in the nation, but the team limited big plays in the run game.

0.113

The Spartan defense posted a passing efficiency of 44.2 percent, 104th in the FBS, and allowed 0.113 EPA/pass.

6.89

Michigan State faced an average third-down distance of 6.89 yards, 39th shortest in the FBS. The Spartans converted third downs at a rate 46.5 percent, 24th in the nation.

rush but will likely need to do it by committee because there doesn't seem to be an individual standout. Jeff Pietrowski returns with 5.5 sacks at defensive end. Florida transfer Khris Bogle and former running back Brandon Wright are candidates to help.

Rugged sophomore Cal Haladay was honorable mention All-Big Ten at linebacker and clinched the Peach Bowl victory with a pick-6. But Haladay is not a cinch to start in 2022 for a corps that is emerging as a team strength. UNLV transfer Jacoby Windmon, Mississippi State transfer Aaron Brule and former nickel back Darius Snow impressed during spring practice. "We definitely have added some very, very good athletes on the defense," says Thorne. "I'll just leave it at that."

Michigan State ranked No. 72 in the nation in yards allowed per play and struggled to get off the field on third down, resulting in a ranking of No. 111 in total defense. Michigan State was one of only six teams in the nation to play more than 1,000 snaps on defense in 2021 and one of only two Power 5 teams in that category, along with Tennessee.

Defensive coordinator Scottie Hazelton needs to fix the pass defense and third-down efficiency, and he has taken over linebacking duties to help see it through.

SPECIALISTS Bryce Baringer led the Big Ten in punting (48.4). But placekicker is a major question mark with fingers crossed for true freshman Jack Stone of Dallas. Reed is a major force on returns, as he averaged nearly 20 yards per punt return and took two to the house in 2021. He also averaged more than 23 yards per kickoff return.

FINAL ANALYSIS Michigan State is strengthening its foundation through Tucker's ambitious national recruiting, aggressive approach to the transfer portal and a Saban-esque demand for physical bodies and details. The program is taking discernible steps forward, but the wins total is likely to decrease in 2022, partly because the Spartans are sure to miss Walker's game-changing explosiveness. "Ken is not a player that you're going to be able to replicate," says Thorne. "We are putting new stuff in. It'll be a little different this year, so it's our job to get better in every area."

It's up to the offensive line to pave a path for Walker's successors and give Thorne time to take the next step. The defense will be less susceptible to air strikes. It all adds up to another winning season as the Spartans gain traction for division title contention in the near future.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

WR	**1**	**Jayden Reed (Sr.)**	4	Germie Bernard (Fr.)
WR	**17**	**Tre Mosley (Jr.)**	16	Christian Fitzpatrick (So.)
WR	0	Keon Coleman (So.)	83	Montorie Foster (Jr.)
LT	**79**	**Jarrett Horst (Sr.)**	53	Brandon Baldwin (So.)
LG	**67**	**J.D. Duplain (Sr.)**	72	Dallas Fincher (So.)
C	59	Nick Samac (Sr.)		Brian Greene (Sr.)
RG	56	Matt Carrick (Sr.)	74	Geno VanDeMark (Fr.)
RT	58	Spencer Brown (Jr.)	77	Ethan Boyd (Fr.)
TE		Daniel Barker (Sr.)	6	Maliq Carr (So.)
QB	**10**	**Payton Thorne (Jr.)**	14	Noah Kim (So.)
RB		Jarek Broussard (Jr.)	8	Jalen Berger (So.)

DEFENSE (8)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	47	Jeff Pietrowski (Jr.)	19	Itayvion Brown (So.)
DT	**64**	**Jacob Slade (Sr.)**	94	Dashaun Mallory (Sr.)
DT	**8**	**Simeon Barrow (So.)**	97	Maverick Hansen (Jr.)
DE	2	Khris Bogle (Sr.)	26	Brandon Wright (Sr.)
MLB	**27**	**Cal Haladay (So.)**	4	Jacoby Windmon (Sr.)
WLB	7	Aaron Brule (Sr.)	**23**	**Darius Snow (Jr.)**
CB	18	Ameer Speed (Sr.)	30	Justin White (Jr.)
CB	**9**	**Ronald Williams (Sr.)**	0	Charles Brantley (So.)
NB	**12**	**Chester Kimbrough (Sr.)**	29	Marqui Lowery (So.)
SS	**3**	**Xavier Henderson (Sr.)**	33	Kendell Brooks (Sr.)
FS	**15**	**Angelo Grose (Jr.)**	1	Jaden Mangham (Fr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K		Jack Stone (Fr.)	KR	1	Jayden Reed (Sr.)
P	99	Bryce Baringer (Sr.)	PR	1	Jayden Reed (Sr.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Payton Thorne	**388**	**234**	**3,233**	**27**	**10**
Anthony Russo	9	7	43	0	0

Rushing	ATT	YDS	AVG	TD
Kenneth Walker III	263	1,636	6.2	18
Jordon Simmons	**70**	**278**	**4.0**	**0**
Payton Thorne	**82**	**181**	**2.2**	**4**
Elijah Collins	**18**	**102**	**5.7**	**0**
Harold Joiner	**13**	**43**	**3.3**	**0**

Receiving	REC	YDS	AVG	TD
Jayden Reed	**59**	**1,026**	**17.4**	**10**
Jalen Nailor	37	695	18.8	6
Tre Mosley	**35**	**530**	**15.1**	**3**
Connor Heyward	35	326	9.3	2
Tyler Hunt	**14**	**136**	**9.7**	**1**

KICKING: Matt Coghlin, 12-19 FGs, 77 pts.
TACKLES: **Cal Haladay, 96; Xavier Henderson, 94**
SACKS: Jacub Panasiuk, 7.0
INTERCEPTIONS: **Cal Haladay, 2**

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE SPARTANS

Opposing Coaches Size Up Michigan State

"There are two big questions: How do you maintain your culture and momentum when you live and die in the portal as much as these guys have, and how is life after Kenneth Walker III? That guy was a legit difference-maker, a real MVP. So many times they'd be stuck, and he would put the game on his shoulders. … They keep one of their two good receivers; otherwise, expect some new faces. They were creative on offense, lots of shift and motion; expect more of that. [Payton] Thorne is pretty good, and that's about it. He had really good numbers because he never had to worry all that much. They're going to have to get more out of him. … The DL always seemed a little beat up, and the secondary was just not good. You could see that Ohio State game coming from miles away. They rode the momentum off Michigan, and then their depth and talent caught up with them against Purdue and OSU. … This is Transfer U. Does that work every season? What's your culture like? It seems like these guys don't set limits like other staffs. Normally, you're working the portal out of extreme need for a position group or to complement a roster. These guys shop the whole store, it seems. They haven't recruited in Michigan high schools as much as you'd expect. … Maybe it works out. No one really has the portal completely figured out. You can't argue with their results so far."

OHIO STATE BUCKEYES

National Forecast: 2 • Big Ten East Prediction: 1 • Projected Record: 12-1, 8-1 Big Ten

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Ryan Day
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 34-4 (3+ years)
CAREER RECORD: 34-4 (3+ years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Kevin Wilson
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jim Knowles
LOCATION: Columbus, OH
STADIUM: Ohio Stadium (102,780)

KEY BUCKEYES

C.J. STROUD, QB He went from preseason question mark to 2021 sensation. Scary as it sounds, No. 7 should make even more strides this fall.

TREVEYON HENDERSON, RB His debut season in scarlet and gray netted 1,560 yards from scrimmage, 19 touchdowns and the promise of more big plays ahead.

JAXON SMITH-NJIGBA, WR The fluid wideout enters the campaign off a record-breaking Rose Bowl performance and will lead a key position group.

KEY LOSSES

GARRETT WILSON, WR The Buckeyes are now without a uniquely talented target who could turn a game or take it over at any moment.

CHRIS OLAVE, WR Defenses often realigned to try to take him away last year, and all he did was produce 65 catches for 936 yards and a team-high 13 receiving TDs.

HASKELL GARRETT, DT Even though the OSU defensive unit will receive a much-needed overhaul, it still will miss his dependability, toughness and leadership.

RISING STAR

A rangy defensive back out of Seffner, Fla., **KYE STOKES** has emerged from a talented incoming class as a defender who may be ready to provide immediate help. The Buckeyes have several capable safeties, but he has a knack for being in the action and breaking up pass attempts.

2022 RECRUITS

1	C.J. Hicks, LB, Dayton, OH	★★★★★
2	Sonny Styles, S, Pickerington, OH	★★★★★
3	Devin Brown, QB, Draper, UT	★★★★
4	Kenyatta Jackson Jr., Edge, Hollywood, FL	★★★★
5	Omari Abor, Edge, Duncanville, TX	★★★★
6	Kaleb Brown, WR, Chicago, IL	★★★★
7	Kyion Grayes, WR, Chandler, AZ	★★★★
8	Gabe Powers, LB, Marysville, OH	★★★★
9	Tegra Tshabola, OT, West Chester, OH	★★★★
10	Caden Curry, Edge, Greenwood, IN	★★★★
11	Hero Kanu, DL, Rancho Santa Margarita, CA	★★★★
12	Caleb Burton, WR, Austin, TX	★★★★
13	Kojo Antwi, WR, Suwanee, GA	★★★★
14	Carson Hinzman, OL, Hammond, WI	★★★★
15	Jyaire Brown, CB, West Chester, OH	★★★★
16	George Fitzpatrick, OT, Englewood, CO	★★★★
17	Dallan Hayden, RB, Memphis, TN	★★★★
18	Ryan Turner, CB, Hollywood, FL	★★★★
19	Kye Stokes, ATH, Seffner, FL	★★★★
20	Bennett Christian, TE, Acworth, GA	★★★
21	Avery Henry, OT, St. Clairsville, OH	★★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite

A numbing loss to archrival Michigan coupled with an absence from both the Big Ten Championship Game and the College Football Playoff rendered 2021 a disappointment for the Buckeyes and their followers. Such is life in Columbus, where 11 wins including a thrilling comeback in the Rose Bowl simply aren't enough.

Head coach Ryan Day, in turn, did some offseason soul searching and reeled in accomplished assistant Jim Knowles to run the defense. Last year, the Buckeyes played on their heels, had tackling issues and gave up way too many lengthy plays. Knowles, who guided a top-five defense at Oklahoma State, of all places, is the hired savior. Assistants Tim Walton and Perry Eliano are on hand to shore up the secondary. Among those who sing Walton's praises is L.A. Rams superstar Jalen Ramsey. Eliano just sent several Cincinnati Bearcats to the NFL.

Day even has shown a willingness to tinker with the high-octane offense, bringing aboard former UCLA aide Justin Frye to improve the production of the offensive line.

When the Buckeyes do have the ball, quarterback C.J. Stroud and wideout Jaxon Smith-Njigba will form one of the best pass-and-catch combos in the nation. Stroud is a preseason Heisman favorite, while Smith-Njigba set school records in receptions (95) and receiving yardage (1,606) last season.

OFFENSE Stroud is the latest Ohio State signal-caller to absolutely flourish in Day's system following the late Dwayne Haskins Jr. and Justin Fields. In 2021, he lit up opponents with both accuracy (71.9 completion percentage) and big plays (4,435 yards and 44 touchdowns) while pitching just six interceptions. If he can be even more efficient in the red zone and use his legs when required, the Buckeyes' offense could soar to even greater heights.

Similarly, it's time for TreVeyon Henderson to make the next step — and that could vault him to the status of the Big Ten's best running back. He can damage a defense at any moment and appears primed for even more success. Still, position coach Tony Alford likes to mix and match in the backfield. Look for Miyan Williams and redshirt freshman Evan Pryor to also have moments of impact.

When we last saw Smith-Njigba without Garrett Wilson and Chris Olave, he was hauling in 15 passes for 347 yards and three scores in a 48–45 Rose Bowl win over Utah — simply one of the best performances in major college history. Plus, he figures to receive plenty of help this year with Marvin Harrison Jr. coming into his own and talents such as Julian Fleming and Emeka Egbuka also making plays.

The offensive line was a tad inconsistent last year and trudges on without Nicholas Petit-Frere and Thayer Munford, but tackles Paris Johnson Jr. and the massive Dawand Jones (6'8", 360) should be solid protectors.

DEFENSE While the offense was among the best in the nation last year, the OSU defense was look-away-bad at times. The Buckeyes ranked in the top five of the Big

C.J. STROUD

Joe Robbins

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Notre Dame
Sept. 10	Arkansas State
Sept. 17	Toledo
Sept. 24	Wisconsin
Oct. 1	Rutgers
Oct. 8	at Michigan State
Oct. 22	Iowa
Oct. 29	at Penn State
Nov. 5	at Northwestern
Nov. 12	Indiana
Nov. 19	at Maryland
Nov. 26	Michigan

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 11-2, 8-1 BIG TEN

Sept. 2	at Minnesota	W	45-31
Sept. 11	Oregon	L	28-35
Sept. 18	Tulsa	W	41-20
Sept. 25	Akron	W	59-7
Oct. 2	at Rutgers	W	52-13
Oct. 9	Maryland	W	66-17
Oct. 23	at Indiana	W	54-7
Oct. 30	Penn State	W	33-24
Nov. 6	at Nebraska	W	26-17
Nov. 13	Purdue	W	59-31
Nov. 20	Michigan State	W	56-7
Nov. 27	at Michigan	L	27-42
Jan. 1	vs. Utah #	W	48-45

#Rose Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	B1G	NATIONAL
Scoring	45.7 ppg	1	1
Rushing	180.6 ypg	5	47
Passing	380.9 ypg	1	3
Total	561.5 ypg	1	1

DEFENSE	PER GAME	B1G	NATIONAL
Scoring	22.8 ppg	9	38
Rushing	126.8 ypg	6	28
Passing	246.2 ypg	12	97
Total	372.9 ypg	9	59

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	B1G	NATIONAL
+9	+0.69	2	15

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	30.1	40
Defense	24.4	1
Margin	+5.7	7
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	54.3%	1
Defense	43.3%	81
Margin	+11.0%	3
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	8.1	1
Defense	5.4	40
Margin	+2.7	2
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	5.1	4
Defense	4.1	67
Margin	+1.0	12
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	5.4	6
Actual	9	14
Margin	+3.6	34

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

67.2%

The Buckeyes made the most of their possessions in 2021. Ohio State generated quality possessions on 67.2 percent of all non-garbage drives, the most in the FBS.

0.091

A shortcoming during the Buckeyes' 11-win 2021 season was their pass defense. The Buckeyes allowed 0.091 EPA/pass in 2021, ranking 78th nationally in that category. Ohio State allowed a 43.5 percent passing success rate (94th overall).

110

Ohio State ran the ball 12.6 percent less than the average college football team, ranking 110th in the nation in rushing play percentage.

Ten in sacks and interceptions but were ninth in points allowed per game (22.8) and struggled in other areas. Knowles is addressing the problem by stressing better pursuit angles, more aggression, deeper use of the roster and varying looks.

Keep an eye on Jack Sawyer up front. Knowles likes his tenacity and versatility and believes he can be moved around the formation. J.T. Tuimoloau is another developing weapon outside to accent the hulking Zach Harrison and agile Javontae Jean-Baptiste. Taron Vincent, Jerron Cage and Ty Hamilton bring experience to the interior.

The Buckeyes need dependability in the middle of the unit, and junior linebacker Tommy Eichenberg is ready to provide it. He amassed 17 tackles in the Rose Bowl and followed up with an impressive spring. Converted running backs Steele Chambers and Arizona State transfer Chip Trayanum as well as Teradja Mitchell, a co-captain last season, also figure into the mix at LB.

The development of the secondary will be both key and intriguing. Veteran corners Denzel Burke and Cameron Brown will draw the tough assignments, but youngster Jordan Hancock will provide additional coverage. Safety could be a strength with the active Ronnie Hickman in the "adjuster" role and the physical Josh Proctor back from a leg fracture that ended his 2021 campaign. Transfer safety Tanner McCalister thrived under Knowles at Oklahoma State.

SPECIALISTS Placekicker Noah Ruggles is coming off a quietly fantastic year, drilling 20-of-21 field-goal attempts and all 74 extra points. Meanwhile, Jesse Mirco punted just 31 times but averaged a solid 42.3 yards per boot. Also returning is long snapper Bradley Robinson. Egbuka is back to return kickoffs after averaging 29.0 yards per runback. Smith-Nijigba could be asked to field punts — but not at the cost of his health.

FINAL ANALYSIS While celebrating the 100-year anniversary of Ohio Stadium, Ohio State will embark on an eight-game home schedule that begins with a visit from Notre Dame and ends with the hated Wolverines coming to town. Mowing through the Irish and a daunting Big Ten will require a new defensive identity and more consistent play up front. The Buckeyes have legitimate All-America candidates at the skill positions but were manhandled in the trenches in both losses last year. The speed, talent and depth are in place, and if the new assistants unearth some needed physicality, this team will be formidable.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	4	Julian Fleming (Jr.)	2	Emeka Egbuka (So.)
WR	**11**	**Jaxon Smith-Njigba (Jr.)**	9	Jayden Ballard (Fr.)
WR	18	Marvin Harrison Jr. (So.)	12	Caleb Burton (Fr.)
LT	**77**	**Paris Johnson Jr. (Jr.)**	65	Zen Michalski (Fr.)
LG	74	Donovan Jackson (So.)	70	Josh Fryar (So.)
C	**53**	**Luke Wypler (So.)**	67	Jakob James (So.)
RG	55	Matthew Jones (Sr.)	66	Enokk Vimahi (Jr.)
RT	**79**	**Dawand Jones (Sr.)**	71	Ben Christman (Fr.)
TE	88	Gee Scott Jr. (Jr.)	84	Joe Royer (So.)
QB	**7**	**C.J. Stroud (So.)**	6	Kyle McCord (So.)
RB	**32**	**TreVeyon Henderson (So.)**	3	Miyan Williams (So.)

DEFENSE (5)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	44	J.T. Tuimoloau (So.)	**9**	**Zach Harrison (Sr.)**
DT	86	Jerron Cage (Sr.)	58	Ty Hamilton (So.)
DT	**6**	**Taron Vincent (Sr.)**	91	Tyleik Williams (So.)
DE	33	Jack Sawyer (So.)	8	Javontae Jean-Baptiste (Sr.)
MLB	35	Tommy Eichenberg (Jr.)	19	Chip Trayanum (Jr.)
OLB	22	Steele Chambers (Jr.)	**3**	**Teradja Mitchell (Sr.)**
CB	26	Cameron Brown (Sr.)	13	Jordan Hancock (So.)
CB	**29**	**Denzel Burke (So.)**	32	Jakailin Johnson (Fr.)
ADJ	**14**	**Ronnie Hickman (Jr.)**		Sonny Styles (Fr.)
SS	41	Josh Proctor (Sr.)	2	Kourt Williams II (So.)
FS	15	Tanner McCalister (Sr.)	37	Kye Stokes (Fr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	95	Noah Ruggles (Sr.)	**KR**	2	Emeka Egbuka (So.)
P	29	Jesse Mirco (So.)	**PR**	11	Jaxon Smith-Njigba (Jr.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
C.J. Stroud	**441**	**317**	**4,435**	**44**	**6**
Kyle McCord	**38**	**25**	**416**	**2**	**2**
Jack Miller III	14	7	101	0	0

Rushing	ATT	YDS	AVG	TD
TreVeyon Henderson	**183**	**1,248**	**6.8**	**15**
Miyan Williams	**71**	**508**	**7.2**	**3**
Master Teague III	67	355	5.3	4
Marcus Crowley	**20**	**103**	**5.2**	**0**
Evan Pryor	**21**	**98**	**4.7**	**1**

Receiving	REC	YDS	AVG	TD
Jaxon Smith-Njigba	**95**	**1,606**	**16.9**	**9**
Garrett Wilson	70	1.058	15.1	12
Chris Olave	65	936	14.4	13
TreVeyon Henderson	**27**	**312**	**11.6**	**4**
Jeremy Ruckert	26	309	11.9	3

KICKING: **Noah Ruggles, 20-21 FGs, 134 pts.**
TACKLES: **Ronnie Hickman, 100; Tommy Eichenberg, 64**
SACKS: Haskell Garrett, 5.5
INTERCEPTIONS: **Ronnie Hickman, 2;** Ryan Watts, 2

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE BUCKEYES

Opposing Coaches Size Up Ohio State

"Most coaches in the country would do anything to have a season that's considered a bad year for Ohio State. Their bad year is a great year for anyone else. When we broke down their roster last season, it was like editing your NCAA video game on dynasty mode and you put everyone at 99. Essentially they could do whatever they wanted to on offense for most of the season. Throw [Garrett] Wilson a bubble screen, he'd go 80 yards. First-round receivers, first-round QB, first-round back, hell, the tight end was an unsung hero who couldn't shine because he couldn't get touches, but he's one of the best in the country. This was one of the best college offenses possible, and even losing NFL receivers, they're still deep at that position. It's insane. … The sole issue that kept them out of the playoff has been fixed. It's all about how fast [DC Jim] Knowles gets them fit for what he wants. If you're looking for a criticism here, they're short superstars on this side lately. They're solid in every phase on defense, but for instance, their linebackers were… fine? The reality is that no one, not even this team, is built to always win by outscoring the other team, and it finally bit them. You're gonna find out right away with Notre Dame, and that will set the tone for how fast you can expect them to be back as a national title contender. Even if they lose that opener, they can still run through this conference. They're that good."

PENN STATE NITTANY LIONS

National Forecast: 25 • Big Ten East Prediction: 4 • Projected Record: 8-4, 6-3 Big Ten

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: James Franklin
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 67-34 (8 years)
CAREER RECORD: 91-49 (11 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mike Yurcich
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Manny Diaz
LOCATION: University Park, PA
STADIUM: Beaver Stadium (106,572)

KEY NITTANY LIONS

SEAN CLIFFORD, QB Clifford is PSU's career leader with a 60.3 percent completion rate and is one of only three PSU quarterbacks to throw for more than 7,500 yards.

PARKER WASHINGTON, WR Finished second on the team in catches each of his first two college seasons, totaling 100 for 1,310 yards and 10 touchdowns in his career to date.

JI'AYIR BROWN, S Intercepted six passes in his second season at Penn State, tying for the FBS lead.

KEY LOSSES

JAHAN DOTSON, WR Finished third in the Big Ten with 91 catches, totaling 1,182 yards and a league-best 12 receiving touchdowns in his final college season.

JAQUAN BRISKER, S Was all over the field for the Nittany Lions, as evidenced by his six tackles for a loss, two interceptions, five pass breakups and 64 total tackles.

ARNOLD EBIKETIE, DE Ranked third in the Big Ten with 9.5 sacks and second with 18 tackles for a loss in his lone season at Penn State.

RISING STAR

Running back **NICK SINGLETON** has been turning heads at Penn State since January when he arrived as an early enrollee. At 6'0", 219 pounds, he appears physically ready for the Big Ten. Given how badly PSU struggled on the ground last fall, this could be an instance of preparation meeting opportunity.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Dani Dennis-Sutton, DL, Owings Mills, MD	★★★★★
2	Nick Singleton, RB, Reading, PA	★★★★★
3	Drew Allar, QB, Medina, OH	★★★★★
4	Kaden Saunders, WR, Westerville, OH	★★★★
5	Drew Shelton, OT, Downington, PA	★★★★
6	Kaytron Allen, RB, Bradenton, FL	★★★★
7	Mehki Flowers, ATH, Harrisburg, PA	★★★★
8	Anthony Ivey, WR, Lancaster, PA	★★★★
9	Cristian Driver, S, Argyle, TX	★★★★
10	Jerry Cross, TE, Milwaukee, WI	★★★★
11	Ken Talley, Edge, Philadelphia, PA	★★★★
12	Cam Miller, CB, Jacksonville, FL	★★★★
13	Zane Durant, DL, Orlando, FL	★★★★
14	Abdul Carter, LB, Glenside, PA	★★★★
15	JB Nelson, OT, Pittsburgh, PA*	★★★★
16	Kevin Winston Jr., S, Hyattsville, MD	★★★★
17	Keon Wylie, LB, Philadelphia, PA	★★★
18	Beau Pribula, QB, York, PA	★★★
19	Omari Evans, WR, Killeen, TX	★★★
20	Vega Ioane, OL, Graham, WA	★★★
21	Kaleb Artis, DL, Fresh Meadows, NY	★★★
22	Tyrece Mills, S, Philadelphia, PA*	★★★
23	Tyler Johnson, WR, Ridgeway, VA	★★★
24	Maleek McNeil, OT, Cortlandt Manor, NY	★★★
25	Alex Bacchetta, P, Atlanta, GA	★★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite

*junior college transfer

Penn State is looking to rebound. The Nittany Lions have gone 11–11 over the past two seasons, and they did not head into the 2022 offseason with the wind at their backs, having dropped six of their last eight games last year, including a 24–10 loss to Arkansas in the Outback Bowl.

"We've got some things to work on," head coach James Franklin conceded following the loss to the Razorbacks. "We'll get it fixed."

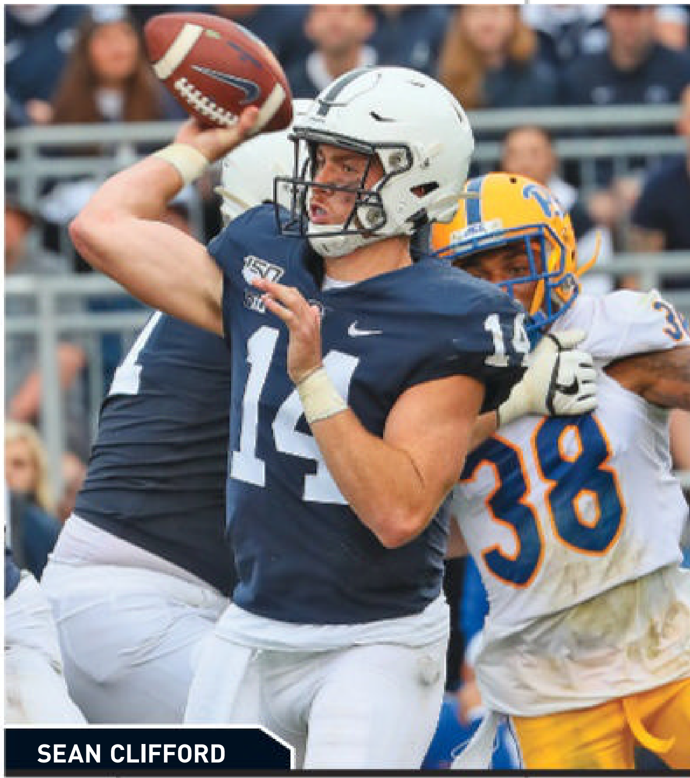
Franklin's to-do list starts with the rushing attack, a surprising liability last season and one that will almost certainly require major contributions from freshmen and sophomores if PSU is to bounce back from its worst two-year performance since going 7–16 in 2003 and '04.

OFFENSE Penn State has one of the most experienced quarterbacks in the country in super senior Sean Clifford. He's had his share of highs and lows, and his most recent performance — a two-interception, 14-of-32 showing in the Outback Bowl — definitely falls into the latter category. But he's started 33 games over the past three seasons and is one of only three players in school history with more than 8,000 yards of total offense. The other three scholarship quarterbacks all have freshman eligibility, so it's unlikely that anyone will dislodge the incumbent ahead of Penn State's Sept. 1 opener at Purdue.

Of more concern is the ground game. Despite boasting a trio of former four-star running backs in their backfield, the Lions didn't have a single 100-yard rushing performance in any game last year. Keyvone Lee led the team in rushing as a sophomore with 530 yards — only 57 more than he gained in 2020 despite playing in three more games. Lee and the other returning runners will be pushed in preseason practice by newcomers Nick Singleton and Kaytron Allen. Singleton, who rushed for nearly 6,400 yards in high school, looks to be an early-impact freshman.

Of course, any improvement here will require a better performance from the offensive line. The Lions will be relying on some players with little game experience at PSU, notably guards Hunter Nourzad and Sal Wormley, guard/tackle Landon Tengwall and tackle Olumuyiwa Fashanu. Among them, those four players have started one game at Penn State, and at least three of them figure to be in the starting lineup this fall. If that unit can give Clifford some time, though, he's got a couple of sure-handed receivers in Parker Washington and WKU transfer Mitchell Tinsley.

DEFENSE First-year Lions defensive coordinator Manny Diaz, formerly head coach at Miami (Fla.), has some holes in his front seven, with a starter needing to be replaced on the line and two others in the linebacker corps. But the Lions are also getting back a couple of key players who suffered season-ending injuries a year ago: defensive tackle PJ Mustipher and defensive end Adisa Isaac. The 6'4", 329-pound Mustipher is an outstanding run-stuffer who was badly missed after after a season-ending left knee injury at Iowa last October. Isaac was a rising star



SEAN CLIFFORD

Bruce Schwartzman

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	at Purdue
Sept. 10	Ohio
Sept. 17	at Auburn
Sept. 24	Central Michigan
Oct. 1	Northwestern
Oct. 15	at Michigan
Oct. 22	Minnesota
Oct. 29	Ohio State
Nov. 5	at Indiana
Nov. 12	Maryland
Nov. 19	at Rutgers
Nov. 26	Michigan State

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 7-6, 4-5 BIG TEN

Sept. 4	at Wisconsin	W	16-10
Sept. 11	Ball State	W	44-13
Sept. 18	Auburn	W	28-20
Sept. 25	Villanova	W	38-17
Oct. 2	Indiana	W	24-0
Oct. 9	at Iowa	L	20-23
Oct. 23	Illinois (ot)	L	18-20
Oct. 30	at Ohio State	L	24-33
Nov. 6	at Maryland	W	31-14
Nov. 13	Michigan	L	17-21
Nov. 20	Rutgers	W	28-0
Nov. 27	at Michigan State	L	27-30
Jan. 1	vs. Arkansas #	L	10-24

#Outback Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	B1G	NATIONAL
Scoring	25.0 ppg	9	90
Rushing	107.8 ypg	13	118
Passing	268.5 ypg	4	26
Total	376.4 ypg	7	82

DEFENSE	PER GAME	B1G	NATIONAL
Scoring	17.3 ppg	2	6
Rushing	152.7 ypg	10	67
Passing	199.8 ypg	3	23
Total	352.5 ypg	5	38

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	B1G	NATIONAL
+6	+0.46	4	31

before suffering an offseason injury that forced him to sit out the entire 2021 campaign.

The Lions will need someone to step up at defensive end, as Arnold Ebiketie is off to the NFL after ranking third in the Big Ten with 9.5 sacks last year. Isaac, who had 1.5 sacks and two QB hurries in limited duty as a sophomore, fits the bill, and he'll be joined this summer by five-star freshman Dani Dennis-Sutton.

At linebacker, Curtis Jacobs is the only returning starter. He ranked sixth on the team with 61 tackles last year. There isn't much experience at the middle linebacker spot, where Tyler Elsdon and Kobe King are competing. And the Lions have raided their secondary to bolster the outside linebacker position opposite Jacobs, moving super senior safety Jonathan Sutherland to that spot.

Even with Sutherland moving, the secondary should be in good hands with cornerback Joey Porter Jr. and field safety Ji'Ayir Brown back. A year ago, Brown tied for the FBS lead with six interceptions. Two members of Penn State's 2021 recruiting class — cornerback Kalen King and safety Jaylen Reed — are in line to start after combining to play in 21 games and forgoing redshirts last year.

SPECIALISTS With all-purpose specialist Jordan Stout graduating, the Lions need a kicker and a punter. They return senior kicker Jake Pinegar, who hit 20-of-25 field-goal attempts in 2019 and 2020 before giving way to Stout last year. But the punting job probably won't be decided until preseason camp, when scholarship freshman Alex Bacchetta will be on hand. The Lions will also miss Jahan Dotson, who handled all but three of Penn State's 25 punt returns the past two seasons. Washington figures to be a contender for those duties.

FINAL ANALYSIS If they're going to break out of the rut they've been in, the Nittany Lions will need to be stronger at the line of scrimmage. There are only so many workarounds available to an offense that can't generate yards on the ground, and when you ask a mercurial quarterback to play hero ball every week, you tend to get what Penn State has gotten the past two years: a .500 record. The infusion of new talent on the line and the backfield should help. Indeed, the Lions are counting on it. The question is whether those players will mature quickly enough to lead Penn State back to Big Ten title contention in 2022.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	**13**	**KeAndre Lambert-Smith (So.)**	80	Malick Meiga (So.)
WR	**3**	**Parker Washington (So.)**	85	Harrison Wallace III (Fr.)
WR	5	Mitchell Tinsley (Sr.)	7	Kaden Saunders (Fr.)
LT	74	Olumuyiwa Fashanu (So.)	51	Jimmy Christ (So.)
LG	58	Landon Tengwall (Fr.)	55	JB Nelson (So.)
C	**70**	**Juice Scruggs (Sr.)**	66	Nick Dawkins (So.)
RG	77	Sal Wormley (Jr.)		Hunter Nourzad (Jr.)
RT	**79**	**Caedan Wallace (Jr.)**	57	Ibrahim Traore (So.)
TE	**86**	**Brenton Strange (Jr.)**	84	Theo Johnson (So.)
QB	**14**	**Sean Clifford (Sr.)**	9	Christian Veilleux (Fr.)
RB	24	Keyvone Lee (So.)	10	Nick Singleton (Fr.)

DEFENSE (6)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	**46**	**Nick Tarburton (Sr.)**	36	Zuriah Fisher (So.)
DT	**97**	**PJ Mustipher (Sr.)**	91	Dvon Ellies (Jr.)
DT	**99**	**Coziah Izzard (So.)**	28	Zane Durant (Fr.)
DE	20	Adisa Isaac (Jr.)	92	Smith Vilbert (Jr.)
OLB	**23**	**Curtis Jacobs (So.)**	45	Charlie Katshir (Sr.)
MLB	43	Tyler Elsdon (So.)	41	Kobe King (Fr.)
OLB	0	Jonathan Sutherland (Sr.)	42	Jamari Buddin (Fr.)
CB	4	Kalen King (So.)	25	Daequan Hardy (Jr.)
CB	**9**	**Joey Porter Jr. (Jr.)**	3	Johnny Dixon (Jr.)
SS	7	Jaylen Reed (So.)	6	Zakee Wheatley (Fr.)
FS	**16**	**Ji'Ayir Brown (Sr.)**	2	Keaton Ellis (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	92	Jake Pinegar (Sr.)	**KR**	28	Devyn Ford (Jr.)
P		Alex Bacchetta (Fr.)	**PR**	3	Parker Washington (So.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Sean Clifford	**428**	**261**	**3,107**	**21**	**8**
Christian Veilleux	**26**	**16**	**238**	**3**	**0**
Ta'Quan Roberson	28	11	85	1	2
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Keyvone Lee	**108**	**530**	**4.9**	**2**	
Noah Cain	106	350	3.3	4	
John Lovett	52	177	3.4	0	
Sean Clifford	**99**	**163**	**1.7**	**2**	
Devyn Ford	**14**	**61**	**4.4**	**2**	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Jahan Dotson	91	1,182	13.0	12	
Parker Washington	**64**	**820**	**12.8**	**4**	
KeAndre Lambert-Smith	**34**	**521**	**15.3**	**3**	
Brenton Strange	**20**	**225**	**11.3**	**3**	
Theo Johnson	**19**	**213**	**11.2**	**1**	

KICKING: Jordan Stout, 16-23 FGs, 82 pts.
TACKLES: Ellis Brooks, 100; Brandon Smith, 81
SACKS: Arnold Ebiketie, 9.5
INTERCEPTIONS: **Ji'Ayir Brown, 6**

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE NITTANY LIONS

Opposing Coaches Size Up Penn State

"Sean Clifford coming back is absolutely huge for them. I know they have his replacement signed, but having him back with that much experience and [OC Mike] Yurcich in Year 2 is gonna be huge for them. They've been really ineffective since [Joe] Moorhead left. They've got to fix the offensive line; they couldn't run and they could pass protect. That's how they ended up losing that much down the stretch. They've been recruiting well at OL, and they need immediate results there. They're turning over the backfield, so the new guys have to come up big for them. … [DC Brent] Pry leaving is a huge deal because he's been with James [Franklin] forever. … Manny [Diaz] is gonna be really aggressive and press those young guys. It was no shock James grabbed him up; he'll be a head coach on that defense. They've got some nice players, especially in the back end. They'll go single high, they'll blitz, they'll get after it right away. … You would think this is a really hungry team and staff because they've fallen off the last few years, and they're not as relevant nationally. Clifford needs protection, and they need to get creative with the playmakers they've got. Having an experienced passer and not installing a new system is a huge win for them. This could be a bounce-back season."

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	26.8	108
Defense	27.1	23
Margin	-0.3	67
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	40.1%	96
Defense	38.9%	28
Margin	+1.2%	64
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	5.35	98
Defense	4.85	10
Margin	+0.5	56
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	3.99	80
Defense	2.91	4
Margin	+1.08	7
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	3.0	26
Actual	6	27
Margin	+3.0	42

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

2.97

Penn State ranked third in defensive finishing drives, allowing 2.97 points per quality possession. The Nittany Lions recovered three fumbles and intercepted six passes on quality possessions last season.

-0.131

The Nittany Lions rushing attack ranked 125th nationally with -0.131 EPA/rush. Penn State was successful on just 34.6 percent of rushes, 108th in the FBS.

39.7%

Opponents avoided third downs against Penn State on just 39.7 percent of all sets of downs, the 13th-lowest rate of any defense in the FBS.

RUTGERS SCARLET KNIGHTS

National Forecast: 81 • Big Ten East Prediction: 6 • Projected Record: 4-8, 2-7 Big Ten

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Greg Schiano
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 76-81 (13 years)
CAREER RECORD: 76-81 (13 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Sean Gleeson
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Joe Harasymiak
LOCATION: New Brunswick, NJ
STADIUM: SHI Stadium (52,454)

KEY SCARLET KNIGHTS

KESSAWN ABRAHAM, CB Abraham was named Rutgers' best defensive player in 2021 after breaking up nine passes during his breakout season.

AVERY YOUNG, S The five-year starter had 81 tackles and two sacks after moving over from cornerback.

ARON CRUICKSHANK, WR He's the Big Ten's most dynamic return man and a valuable weapon as a receiver, although he's on the mend after a torn ACL.

KEY LOSSES

ISAIH PACHECO, RB His rushing numbers were never great due to a subpar offensive line, but Pacheco was a dynamic and durable playmaker and leader.

BO MELTON, WR Rutgers' best offensive player had a career-high 55 catches in 2021, 20 more than the next-closest teammate.

OLAKUNLE FATUKASI, LB The thumping linebacker managed to lead the Scarlet Knights in tackles (89) and had 3.5 sacks despite missing four games.

RISING STAR

Quarterback **GAVIN WIMSATT** had a remarkable debut, throwing a clutch fourth-down conversion pass on the game-winning drive at Illinois that snapped a four-game losing streak for the Knights. He did not do much in his other outings, but no one should read too much into that. He has the tools to elevate Rutgers' offense, and he will be given the chance to do so.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Moses Walker, LB, Brooklyn, NY	★★★★
2	Jacob Allen, OL, Princeton, NJ	★★★★
3	Anthony Johnson, LB, Philadelphia, PA	★★★★
4	Samuel Brown V, RB, Glenside, PA	★★★★
5	Amarion Brown, WR, Stuart, FL	★★★
6	Kenny Fletcher, Edge, Delran, NJ	★★★
7	Thomas Amankwaa, S, Hillsborough, NJ	★★★
8	Kwabena Asamoah, OL, Pickerington, OH	★★★
9	DJ Allen, DL, Leo, IN	★★★
10	Rashad Rochelle, WR, Springfield, IL	★★★
11	Q'yaeir Price, DL, Wayne, NJ	★★★
12	Taj White, OT, Jersey City, NJ	★★★
13	Zilan Williams, CB, Hyattsville, MD	★★★
14	Joe De Croce, OT, Demarest, NJ	★★★
15	Nelson Monegro, OT, Union City, NJ	★★★
16	Mike Higgins, TE, Blairstown, NJ	★★★
17	Emir Stinette, OL, Philadelphia, PA	★★★
18	Micah Wing, LB, Wilmington, DE	★★★
19	Dantae Chin, OL, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	★★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite

Greg Schiano remarked after Rutgers' first spring practice that the Scarlet Knights were still quite young in their total program reload. While that may be true, the days of true expectations are fast approaching.

It's Year 3 of the coach's second stint on campus. Sixteen projected starters — 10 on offense, six on defense — are recruits or transfers signed by Schiano and his staff. Rutgers improved from three wins in 2020 to five in 2021, backing into a surprise Gator Bowl bid on the strength of a high APR score after Texas A&M withdrew for COVID-19 reasons. Now they head into 2022 with excitement surrounding Gavin Wimsatt, the program's quarterback of the future, and a revamped offensive line, not to mention a slew of returning standouts on both sides of the ball.

There isn't pressure to win yet. But the Scarlet Knights are certainly closer to being ready to do so, and there is plenty of belief this team can achieve traditional bowl eligibility this fall if everything comes together.

OFFENSE It's a big year for offensive coordinator Sean Gleeson, as his unit regressed in 2021 (120th in total and scoring offense) after surprising during the pandemic-abbreviated 2020 campaign. The unit will go as far as the offensive line takes it. Rutgers has struggled to field a Big Ten-caliber line for years, but it believes it turned the corner this offseason. The Scarlet Knights signed seven high school linemen during the 2022 cycle and landed four high-profile transfers.

The new-look line will be tasked with protecting Wimsatt. The four-star recruit from Owensboro, Ky., arrived on campus last September after a surprise high school graduation and appeared in four games, seeing significant snaps in the bowl game. The expectation is that this will be his unit from Day 1 this fall. But Schiano and Gleeson have been remarkably committed to Noah Vedral (seven TDs, seven INTs, 59.4 percent passing) the last two seasons despite his inconsistent play. A platoon can't be ruled out.

Kyle Monangai (four rush TDs) and Aaron Young (293 yards from scrimmage, six total TDs) will be the lead backs. The diminutive Monangai fits Gleeson's scheme well and runs bigger than his size, while Young is more of a receiving threat and could line up in the slot. Schiano and staff were able to overhaul the receiving corps through the transfer portal. Taj Harris (Syracuse) and Sean Ryan (West Virginia) will join speedster Aron Cruickshank (recovering from a torn ACL) as the top targets.

Tight end remains a bit of a question mark, but the staff is high on converted quarterback Johnny Langan (18 catches for 177 yards). Langan could also see more work as a wildcat quarterback.

DEFENSE Rutgers' defense wasn't great — it ranked 10th or worse in the Big Ten in the four major team categories — but it was also integral to all three of its Power 5 wins, when the Knights held opponents to 14 points or fewer with a combined plus-9 turnover margin. The Scarlet Knights also dominated conference champion Michigan

KESSAWN ABRAHAM

Peter Brouillet

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	at Boston College
Sept. 10	Wagner
Sept. 17	at Temple
Sept. 24	Iowa
Oct. 1	at Ohio State
Oct. 8	Nebraska
Oct. 22	Indiana
Oct. 29	at Minnesota
Nov. 5	Michigan
Nov. 12	at Michigan State
Nov. 19	Penn State
Nov. 26	at Maryland

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 5-8, 2-7 BIG TEN

Sept. 4	Temple	W	61-14
Sept. 11	at Syracuse	W	17-7
Sept. 18	Delaware	W	45-13
Sept. 25	at Michigan	L	13-20
Oct. 2	Ohio State	L	13-52
Oct. 9	Michigan State	L	13-31
Oct. 16	at Northwestern	L	7-21
Oct. 30	at Illinois	W	20-14
Nov. 6	Wisconsin	L	3-52
Nov. 13	at Indiana	W	38-3
Nov. 20	at Penn State	L	0-28
Nov. 27	Maryland	L	16-40
Dec. 31	vs. Wake Forest #	L	10-38

#Gator Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	B1G	NATIONAL
Scoring	19.7 ppg	12	120
Rushing	138.7 ypg	9	89
Passing	172.2 ypg	11	114
Total	310.9 ypg	12	120

DEFENSE	PER GAME	B1G	NATIONAL
Scoring	25.6 ppg	11	56
Rushing	161.5 ypg	13	81
Passing	234.9 ypg	10	75
Total	396.5 ypg	11	81

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	B1G	NATIONAL
+4	+0.31	5	40

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	30.7	30
Defense	26.2	11
Margin	+4.5	12
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	39.0%	107
Defense	39.3%	36
Margin	-0.3%	73
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	4.6	123
Defense	6.0	96
Margin	-1.4	117
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	3.4	116
Defense	4.0	50
Margin	-0.6	100
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	3.5	17
Actual	3	41
Margin	-0.5	71

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

-0.152

Rutgers' offense regressed in several areas, including explosiveness. The Knights ranked 128th in offensive explosiveness in 2021, averaging -0.152 EPA/play.

28

Along those same lines, Rutgers created just 28 plays of 20-plus yards in non-garbage time last season, ranking 125th in college football in big plays.

73.81%

The Knights ranked 110th nationally in red zone scoring percentage (touchdowns and field goals), earning points on only 73.81 percent of their trips inside the opponent's 20-yard line.

in the second half of a one-score loss at the Big House.

New defensive coordinator Joe Harasymiak could benefit from the best Rutgers pass rush in years. End Aaron Lewis is set for a breakout season. Kyonte Hamilton is a budding star who can play inside or out. The Scarlet Knights also have two proven tackles in Mayan Ahanotu and Ifeanyi Maijeh.

The Knights will be very young (and thin) at linebacker after losing 96 combined starts to the NFL draft. Tyreem Powell started three games and will lead that group, which could struggle. Star freshman Moses Walker suffered a season-ending ACL tear in spring practice, and Mohamed Toure could also miss significant time with a spring injury.

Secondary is an area of strength. The Scarlet Knights are deep at cornerback with returning starters Kessawn Abraham and Max Melton (three INTs), and they will get Temple transfer Christian Braswell back after he missed last season with a torn ACL. Avery Young (81 tackles) moved to safety from corner last fall; he returns along with Christian Izien and Desmond Igbinosun, who had a strong second half in 2021.

SPECIALISTS Punter Adam Korsak will look to cap his sensational career by besting Rutgers' NCAA-record 45.25 net yards per kick from last season. The Ray Guy Award finalist will break in a new battery mate, as Zack Taylor replaces his older brother Billy at long snapper. Kicker Valentino Ambrosio, a former Rutgers soccer player, had some big misses early last season and entered the transfer portal in the spring. His replacement could be kickoff specialist Guy Fava, incoming recruit Jai Patel or a transfer portal addition.

FINAL ANALYSIS The opener at Boston College will be critical, as Rutgers' most direct path to traditional bowl eligibility will always include a perfect nonconference record. Lose to the Eagles, and the Scarlet Knights will likely need an upset somewhere along the way to reach six wins. That will not be easy to do with the usual Big Ten East Division slate plus crossovers with Iowa and Minnesota.

The defense, warts and all, was good enough to win games last fall. The special teams should be strong again. It's all about the offense. If the line makes major strides, and Wimsatt can provide more of a vertical presence, Rutgers can go bowling. But there is a real chance this team takes a step back in 2022 despite improved talent and depth.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

WR	85	Taj Harris (Sr.)	11	Don Munnerlyn (So.)
WR	5	Sean Ryan (Sr.)	**7**	**Shameen Jones (Sr.)**
WR	**2**	**Aron Cruickshank (Sr.)**	83	Joshua Youngblood (Jr.)
LT	77	Willie Tyler III (Sr.)	74	Jacob Allen (Fr.)
LG	53	Mike Ciaffoni (Jr.)	51	Curtis Dunlap Jr. (Sr.)
C	57	Ireland Brown (Jr.)	59	Gus Zilinskas (So.)
RG	55	J.D. DiRenzo (Sr.)	**70**	**Reggie Sutton (Sr.)**
RT	**72**	**Hollin Pierce (So.)**	55	Kamar Missouri (So.)
TE	21	Johnny Langan (Sr.)	10	Matt Alaimo (Sr.)
QB	2	Gavin Wimsatt (So.)	**0**	**Noah Vedral (Sr.)**
RB	23	Kyle Monangai (So.)	4	Aaron Young (Jr.)

DEFENSE (5)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	48	Kyonte Hamilton (So.)	23	Wesley Bailey (So.)
DT	**92**	**Mayan Ahanotu (Sr.)**	51	Troy Rainey (So.)
DT	88	Ifeanyi Maijeh (Sr.)	55	Zaire Angoy (So.)
DE	71	Aaron Lewis (So.)	11	Cam'Ron Stewart (So.)
LB	8	Mohamed Toure (Jr.)	12	Khayri Banton (So.)
LB	22	Tyreem Powell (So.)	44	Anthony Johnson (Fr.)
LB	17	Deion Jennings (Sr.)	38	Austin Dean (So.)
CB	**5**	**Kessawn Abraham (Sr.)**	6	Christian Braswell (Sr.)
CB	**16**	**Max Melton (So.)**	7	Robert Longerbeam (So.)
S	**2**	**Avery Young (Sr.)**	4	Desmond Igbinosun (So.)
S	**0**	**Christian Izien (Sr.)**	37	Joe Lusardi (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	96	Guy Fava (Jr.)	**KR**	2	Aron Cruickshank (Sr.)
P	94	Adam Korsak (Sr.)	**PR**	2	Aron Cruickshank (Sr.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Noah Vedral	**303**	**180**	**1,823**	**7**	**7**
Evan Simon	**28**	**16**	**145**	**0**	**1**
Cole Snyder	28	18	130	1	0
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Isaih Pacheco	167	647	3.9	5	
Noah Vedral	**102**	**297**	**2.9**	**2**	
Kyle Monangai	**62**	**235**	**3.8**	**4**	
Aaron Young	**56**	**205**	**3.7**	**5**	
Johnny Langan	**34**	**109**	**3.2**	**3**	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Bo Melton	55	618	11.2	3	
Shameen Jones	**35**	**334**	**9.5**	**0**	
Aron Cruickshank	**20**	**244**	**12.2**	**2**	
Isaiah Washington	**19**	**179**	**9.4**	**0**	
Johnny Langan	**18**	**177**	**9.8**	**0**	

KICKING: Valentino Ambrosio, 12-16 FGs, 66 pts.
TACKLES: Olakunle Fatukasi, 89; **Avery Young, 81**
SACKS: **Mohamed Toure, 4.5**
INTERCEPTIONS: **Max Melton, 3**

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE SCARLET KNIGHTS

Opposing Coaches Size Up Rutgers

"Greg Schiano is doing what they asked him to. It's about getting all the way back to their roots from his Big East run when they had all that great success. He's done a really great job working with high schools in the New Jersey area. He wants fit guys, not just the best available, and everything we hear is that the administration is committed to a long-term rebuild. He hired his staff with that in mind, all guys with obvious Northeast connections. … They're doing a pretty good job recruiting defensively. That could really end up being their strength because they started a lot of really young guys and let them get the reps and learn the hard way. … There's a talent gap on film, but they're really physical, and they do a good job with their technique. … It really comes down to long-term expectations. No one in the league doubts what they're doing; it's just an issue of where the ceiling will be. He's gonna have them as a bowl qualifier, no doubt, but the old Rutgers succeeded in a completely different conference, and they're on murderer's row being in the East. … They're playing with a lot of energy and physicality, and they're not afraid. The biggest compliment you can give them is that they're not acting like they're rebuilding or a doormat."

ILLINOIS FIGHTING ILLINI

National Forecast: 67 • Big Ten West Prediction: 6 • Projected Record: 6-6, 3-6 Big Ten

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Bret Bielema
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 5-7 (1 year)
CAREER RECORD: 102-65 (13 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Barry Lunney Jr.
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Ryan Walters
LOCATION: Champaign, IL
STADIUM: Memorial Stadium (60,670)

KEY FIGHTING ILLINI

CHASE BROWN, RB The Canadian by way of Western Michigan topped 1,000 yards and has a chance to move way up the school's career rushing list.

ALEX PALCZEWSKI, RG Entering his sixth season with 52 career starts, the guard/tackle will smash the school record for starts during his final campaign.

SYDNEY BROWN, S Chase's identical twin led the team with 81 tackles. He's entering his fifth year as a starting safety.

KEY LOSSES

KERBY JOSEPH, S First-team All-Big Ten safety led the Big Ten in the regular season with five interceptions and finished third nationally with three fumble recoveries.

VEDERIAN LOWE, LT Five-year regular at tackle left the school as the career co-leader in starts.

DANIEL BARKER, TE Tied for the team lead with five touchdowns (four receiving, one rushing). Transferred to Michigan State.

RISING STAR

Floridian **JER'ZHAN NEWTON**, who goes by "Johnny," tied for third on the team in sacks in 2021 and led the defensive line with 51 total tackles. He's a high-motor guy who is expected to fill the pressure gap left by departed seniors Owen Carney Jr., Isaiah Gay and Roderick Perry II.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Aidan Laughery, ATH, Gibson City, IL	★★★
2	Jared Badie, LB, Oswego, IL	★★★
3	Elijah Mc-Cantos, CB, Miami, FL	★★★
4	Shawn Miller, WR, Bradenton, FL	★★★
5	Eian Pugh, WR, Oak Park, IL	★★★
6	Zy Crisler, OL, Perkinston, MS*	★★★
7	Joey Okla, OL, Hartland, WI	★★★
8	Magnus Møller, OT, Denmark	★★★
9	Isaiah Adams, OT, Garden City, KS*	★★★
10	Jordan Anderson, RB, Joliet, IL	★★★
11	Hunter Whitenack, OT, New Carlisle, IN	★★★
12	Matt Fries, OT, Cranford, NJ	★★★
13	Malachi Hood, LB, Joliet, IL	★★★
14	Owen Anderson, TE, Princeton, NJ	★★★
15	Donovan Leary, QB, Sicklerville, NJ	★★★
16	Ashton Hollins, ATH, Lucedale, MS	★★★
17	Gabe Jacas, Edge, Fort Pierce, FL	★★★
18	Tyson Rooks, WR, Brunswick, GA	★★★
19	Henry Boyer, TE, Oak Lawn, IL	★★★
20	Xavier Scott, CB, Palm Beach Gardens, FL	★★★
21	Hank Beatty, WR, Rochester, IL	★★★
22	Naivyan Cargill, TE, Palm Beach Gardens, FL	★★★
23	TJ Griffin, S, Palos Hills, IL	★★★
24	James Kreutz, LB, Wilmette, IL	★★★
25	Matthew Bailey, S, Moline, IL	★★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite *junior college transfer

Just before the start of spring practice, second-year Illinois head coach Bret Bielema decided to take his young daughters Briella and Brexli to Disney World for the first time. "I know I can handle 120 young men on a field for two hours. I don't know if I can handle a 4- and 2-year-old in a theme park for a day," Bielema said.

He was happy with the experience. "It was 12 hours of nonstop fun," Bielema said. "Those are moments you can take with you."

The trip was a piece of cake compared to what Bielema is attempting to pull off in Champaign-Urbana. His 5–7 debut was the school's 10th consecutive losing season.

Yet everywhere he looks, Bielema sees progress toward the goal of contending in the Big Ten West. "I feel much more comfortable walking in the building every day, knowing everybody knows their job," Bielema says. "We've got a big saying here: We've got four things coming in the door, four things going out the door. The first thing they see in that sign is 'Do your job.'"

Communication between the staff and players has improved dramatically.

"Everybody understands the things we're saying but also the things we're not saying," Bielema says. "The expectation level is a lot better in the building."

OFFENSE Not satisfied with the direction of the Illinois attack, Bielema made a change at the top. Out went one-year coordinator Tony Petersen, and in came former UTSA offensive coordinator Barry Lunney Jr. He worked as tight ends coach at Arkansas under Bielema and knows what the boss wants.

Lunney promises to run a tempo offense, with the pace determined by the game situations. He wants a balanced system with the idea of keeping opposing defenses guessing — run when they expect you to pass, pass when it looks like a run.

Lunney inherited four assistants already in place. He is the lone new guy. "They've been awesome," Lunney says.

The strength of the offense is at running back, where 1,000-yard rusher Chase Brown is joined by promising Josh McCray and a handful of capable reserves.

"You earn the right to get the ball. I know we've got some talent there. We've got to run the football. That's going to be the starting point of who we are offensively," Lunney says.

Syracuse transfer Tommy DeVito is a one-year answer at quarterback. Lunney hopes DeVito can repeat his 2019 season with the Orange, when he threw for 2,360 yards and 19 scores. "I think he should be confident in his abilities. He's played a lot of football and has made a lot of good plays," Lunney says. Former Rutgers transfer Artur Sitkowski provides an option if DeVito falters.

DeVito will work behind a rebuilt offensive line that welcomes back starters Alex Palczewski and Julian Pearl.

Converted quarterback Isaiah Williams easily led the team with 47 catches, more than double No. 2 Casey Washington, who had 21. Williams tied for the team

CHASE BROWN

Illinois Athletics

2022 SCHEDULE

Aug. 27	Wyoming
Sept. 3	at Indiana
Sept. 10	Virginia
Sept. 24	Chattanooga
Oct. 1	at Wisconsin
Oct. 8	Iowa
Oct. 15	Minnesota
Oct. 29	at Nebraska
Nov. 5	Michigan State
Nov. 12	Purdue
Nov. 19	at Michigan
Nov. 26	at Northwestern

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 5-7, 4-5 BIG TEN

Aug. 28	Nebraska	W	30-22
Sept. 4	UTSA	L	30-37
Sept. 11	at Virginia	L	14-42
Sept. 17	Maryland	L	17-20
Sept. 25	at Purdue	L	9-13
Oct. 2	Charlotte	W	24-14
Oct. 9	Wisconsin	L	0-24
Oct. 23	at Penn State (ot)	W	20-18
Oct. 30	Rutgers	L	14-20
Nov. 6	at Minnesota	W	14-6
Nov. 20	at Iowa	L	23-33
Nov. 27	Northwestern	W	47-14

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	B1G	NATIONAL
Scoring	20.2 ppg	11	115
Rushing	173.6 ypg	7	55
Passing	156.2 ypg	14	122
Total	329.8 ypg	10	112

DEFENSE	PER GAME	B1G	NATIONAL
Scoring	21.9 ppg	6	29
Rushing	150.4 ypg	9	63
Passing	215.2 ypg	7	43
Total	365.6 ypg	6	46

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	B1G	NATIONAL
+7	+0.58	3	22

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	28.7	69
Defense	26.8	18
Margin	+1.9	35
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	38.7%	109
Defense	43.7%	88
Margin	-5.0%	107
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	5.0	114
Defense	5.4	37
Margin	-0.4	93
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	3.5	112
Defense	3.5	27
Margin	+0.0	79
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	-0.2	73
Actual	5	32
Margin	+5.2	24

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

36.9%

Illinois generated quality possessions at a rate of 36.9 percent, 119th in the FBS. The Illini started drives at their 28.7-yard line but failed to translate that field position into points, scoring only 4.2 points per quality possession.

32.4%

The Illini posted the 122nd-worst passing efficiency number in college football, averaging a 32.4 percent success rate and a 50.7 percent completion percentage.

-0.031

Illinois's defense was a bright spot on the season, holding opponents to -0.031 EPA/pass, 33rd in the FBS and sixth in the Big Ten.

lead with four touchdown catches and had two more scores on the ground. Lunney wants to get him the ball more often in space.

Tight end Luke Ford is looking for a big senior season under Lunney, who has produced NFL-level tight ends in the past, such as the Patriots' Hunter Henry.

DEFENSE While the offense struggled, Ryan Walters' unit held up its end. A year after Lovie Smith's team finished 97th nationally in points allowed, Walters and Co. improved to No. 29 in scoring defense. And in total defense, the crew jumped from No. 114 to No. 46.

Solid? Yes. But Walters says there is room to improve. He brings back an intriguing combination of youth and experience. Only three seniors are projected as starters.

The two leading tacklers are back, and five of the top seven from 2021 return.

If Calvin Hart Jr. is able to play like he did in the 2021 opener, linebacker will be a strength. The NC State transfer earned national Player of the Week honors after helping the Illini beat Nebraska. Unfortunately, Hart tore up his knee late in the game and was lost for the season. Fully cleared to return, he participated in spring workouts and is expected to start alongside No. 2 tackler Tarique Barnes. "I'm excited to get him back on the field," Walters says of Hart.

Up front, Keith Randolph Jr. looks to continue on an upward trajectory after finishing second on the team with four sacks.

The secondary is led by returning starters Sydney Brown and Devon Witherspoon.

SPECIALISTS Illinois is starting over at three critical spots: kicker, punter and long snapper. Five-year starting punter Blake Hayes and three-year starting kicker James McCourt are out of eligibility and looking for spots in the NFL. At kicker, longtime backup Caleb Griffin from nearby Danville is expected to get the call. Hugh Robertson, a former police officer, is in line to replace fellow Australian Hayes as punter.

FINAL ANALYSIS The Illini were oh-so-close to an unexpected bowl bid in Bielema's first season, falling one win short. The team had four losses decided by a touchdown or less. If the offense is able to make statistical jumps similar to the Illini defense in 2021, it will be enough to push the program over the bowl hump.

The schedule is challenging, with eight bowl teams on tap. But the Big Ten did Illinois a favor, replacing a ninth bowl team (Penn State) with Indiana.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)				
WR	**1**	**Isaiah Williams (So.)**		Hank Beatty (Fr.)
WR	14	Casey Washington (Jr.)	7	Brian Hightower (Sr.)
WR	13	Pat Bryant (So.)	8	Shawn Miller (Fr.)
LT	78	Isaiah Adams (Jr.)	72	Zy Crisler (So.)
LG	66	Jordyn Slaughter (Jr.)	68	Zachary Barlev (Fr.)
C	75	Alex Pihlstrom (Sr.)	64	Josh Kreutz (Fr.)
RG	**63**	**Alex Palczewski (Sr.)**		Joey Okla (Fr.)
RT	**54**	**Julian Pearl (Jr.)**	72	Zy Crisler (So.)
TE	**82**	**Luke Ford (Sr.)**	89	Tip Reiman (So.)
QB	3	Tommy DeVito (Sr.)	9	Artur Sitkowski (Jr.)
RB	**2**	**Chase Brown (Jr.)**	0	Josh McCray (So.)
DEFENSE (6)		Returning Starters in **BOLD**		
DE	**0**	**Keith Randolph Jr. (So.)**	91	Jamal Woods (Sr.)
DT	93	Calvin Avery (Sr.)	52	Verdis Brown (Jr.)
DE	**4**	**Jer'Zhan Newton (So.)**	23	TeRah Edwards (Fr.)
OLB	49	Seth Coleman (So.)	25	Jared Badie (Fr.)
ILB	5	Calvin Hart Jr. (Jr.)	38	Isaac Darkangelo (Sr.)
ILB	**8**	**Tarique Barnes (Jr.)**	40	Shammond Cooper (So.)
OLB	33	Ezekiel Holmes (Jr.)	90	Alec Bryant (Fr.)
CB	**31**	**Devon Witherspoon (Jr.)**	2	Daniel Edwards (Fr.)
CB	10	Tahveon Nicholson (So.)	7	Kendall Smith (Sr.)
S	**30**	**Sydney Brown (Sr.)**	1	Kionte Curry (Fr.)
S	**21**	**Jartavius Martin (Sr.)**	41	Joriell Washington (Fr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	5	Caleb Griffin (Jr.)	**KR**	2	Chase Brown (Jr.)
P	19	Hugh Robertson (Fr.)	**PR**	1	Isaiah Williams (So.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	**ATT**	**COMP**	**YDS**	**TD**	**INT**
Brandon Peters	169	91	1,170	7	4
Artur Sitkowski	**148**	**74**	**704**	**6**	**2**
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Chase Brown	**170**	**1,005**	**5.9**	**5**	
Josh McCray	**112**	**549**	**4.9**	**2**	
Reggie Love III	**44**	**158**	**3.6**	**0**	
Jakari Norwood	27	120	4.4	0	
Mike Epstein	25	107	4.3	1	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Isaiah Williams	**47**	**525**	**11.2**	**4**	
Casey Washington	**21**	**294**	**14.0**	**0**	
Daniel Barker	18	202	11.2	4	
Donny Navarro III	17	167	9.8	0	
Luke Ford	**15**	**114**	**7.6**	**2**	

KICKING: James McCourt, 18-23 FGs, 80 pts.
TACKLES: **Sydney Brown, 81; Tarique Barnes, 80**
SACKS: Owen Carney Jr., 6.5
INTERCEPTIONS: Kerby Joseph, 5

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE FIGHTING ILLINI

Opposing Coaches Size Up Illinois

"It's no secret — Bret Bielema is all-in on trying to replicate Wisconsin here. Whether or not you can do that remains to be seen, but it might be an easier blueprint than some of the other plans to rebuild this program. Bret brings that edge, demanding physicality, demanding competition. Offensively they struggled a lot, but they did a pretty good job running the ball, and they've been out trying to find bigs on the OL to make that their identity. … I don't think they'll be dramatically different with the new OC; they're just trying to find more consistency. They need a quarterback, and they need playmakers on the edge. Right now, you don't really respect their ability to hit you deep or change it up if you're loading up the box. … They got a little better last season because their defense stepped up. They got saltier as the season went along; it was impressive to see. They could easily sneak up on a better program early this year because those guys are coming back and they have room to grow and improve. … It's going to be interesting this year because they had a lot of roster guys using that extra COVID year last season, maybe the most in our conference. That gave them a lot of veteran presence. … If they want to build on last season, they have to find a quarterback going into camp, and the defense has to take that next step up."

IOWA HAWKEYES

National Forecast: 32 • Big Ten West Prediction: 3 • Projected Record: 8-4, 5-4 Big Ten

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Kirk Ferentz
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 178-110 (23 years)
CAREER RECORD: 178-110 (23 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Brian Ferentz
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Phil Parker
LOCATION: Iowa City, IA
STADIUM: Kinnick Stadium (69,250)

KEY HAWKEYES

JACK CAMPBELL, LB Started all 14 games last season and led the country with 143 tackles. He added two interceptions, a forced fumble, six pass breakups and six quarterback hurries.

SAM LAPORTA, TE He's back after considering a jump to the NFL Draft. He led the team in both receiving yards (670) and catches (53) last season.

TORY TAYLOR, P Australia native ranked third in the Big Ten, averaging 46.1 yards per punt. Taylor led the Big Ten and ranked second nationally with 80 punts.

KEY LOSSES

TYLER LINDERBAUM, C Won the Rimington Trophy last season as the nation's top center and was a unanimous All-American before declaring for the NFL Draft.

TYLER GOODSON, RB Three-year starter rushed for 1,151 yards last season as a junior, bringing his career total to 2,551 rushing yards, with 18 career touchdowns.

CALEB SHUDAK, K Named third-team AP All-American after making 24-of-28 field-goal attempts and all 36 of his PATs last season. Made 7-of-7 attempts from 40-49 yards and 4-of-6 attempts from 50-plus.

RISING STAR

True freshman **XAVIER NWANKPA** was considered by many the top high school safety in the country last season. He grew up in Altoona, Iowa, which is less than two hours from the Iowa campus, and he picked Iowa over Ohio State and Notre Dame. He graduated early from high school and joined the team in January.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Xavier Nwankpa, S, Des Moines, IA	★★★★
2	Aaron Graves, DL, Gowrie, IA	★★★★
3	Kaleb Johnson, RB, Hamilton, OH	★★★
4	Caden Crawford, DL, Lansing, KS	★★★
5	Carson May, QB, Jones, OK	★★★
6	TJ Hall, ATH, Fresno, CA	★★★
7	Brian Allen Jr., DL, Oakdale, CT	★★★
8	Koen Entringer, ATH, Walled Lake, MI	★★★
9	Olando Trader, CB, Jackson, MI	★★★
10	Deshaun Lee, CB, Belleville, MI	★★★
11	Jacob Bostick, WR, Palatine, IL	★★★
12	Jaziun Patterson, RB, Deerfield Beach, FL	★★★
13	Cael Vanderbush, TE, Plainfield, IN	★★★
14	Kale Krogh, OT, Huxley, IA	★★★
15	Jack Dotzler, OT, Waunakee, WI	★★★
16	Addison Ostrenga, TE, Sun Prairie, WI	★★★
17	Landyn Van Kekerix, LB, Rock Valley, IA	★★★
18	Jayden Montgomery, LB, Green Bay, WI	★★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite *junior college transfer

Kirk Ferentz will be 67 when the season starts, and while some members of his staff have recently retired or stepped away from coaching, things are business as usual for Ferentz. He just recently agreed to a new contract extension that runs through the 2029 season, and he already is the longest-tenured head coach in college football as he enters his 24th season in Iowa City.

It also could be argued that Ferentz is getting better with age, with Iowa coming off a season in which it won the Big Ten West Division for the second time and finished 10–4 overall. Iowa has won 10 games in two of the last three seasons and has a 26–9 record since 2019.

However, some will say that Iowa won 10 games last season despite its sputtering offense, which ranked at or near the bottom of the Big Ten in numerous statistical categories. Iowa also closed last season with back-to-losses, getting crushed by Michigan 42–3 in the Big Ten Championship Game and losing 20–17 to Kentucky in the Citrus Bowl.

The offense has struggled during most of Brian Ferentz's time as offensive coordinator, dating back to 2017. Iowa hasn't had a first-team All-Big Ten quarterback since Drew Tate in 2004, and not since the 2015 season has an Iowa quarterback completed at least 60 percent of his passes (C.J. Beathard, 61.6 percent).

Fans have been left to wonder how good Iowa could be if the offense was simply average. Defense and special teams have been rock-solid, and that should be the case again.

OFFENSE You name it and Iowa probably struggled to do it on offense last season. The Hawkeyes averaged just 123.6 rushing yards per game and 3.4 yards per carry. And that was with 1,000-yard rusher Tyler Goodson, who skipped his senior season to enter the 2022 NFL Draft.

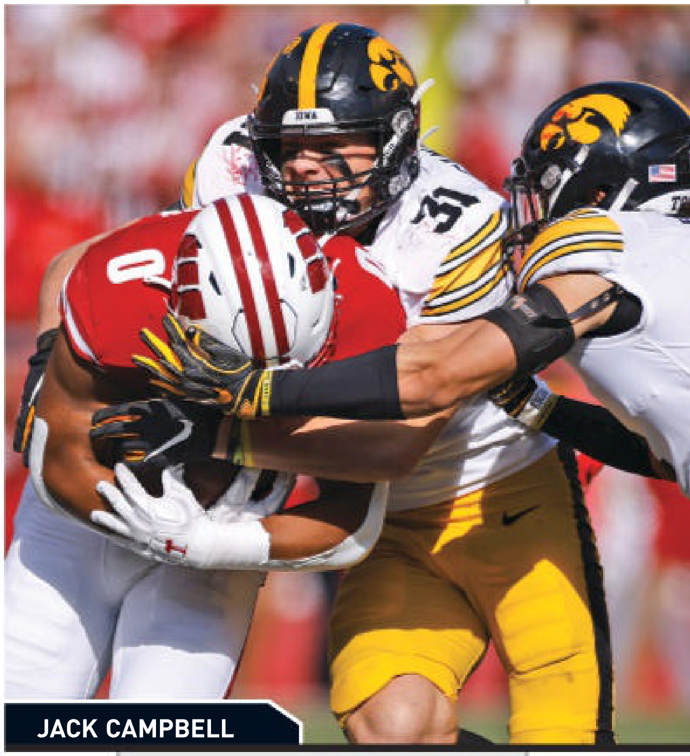
Gavin Williams and Leshon Williams both ran hard and were effective in the Citrus Bowl, and there will also be three other running backs on scholarship, including two incoming freshmen. So, there are plenty of candidates to replace Goodson.

Quarterback is a major concern — at least among the fans — as senior Spencer Petras completed only 57.3 percent of his passes last season and threw almost as many interceptions (nine) as touchdown passes (10). Junior Alex Padilla started three games when Petras was injured, but the results were mixed, as Padilla completed 49.1 percent of his passes and didn't play in the Citrus Bowl.

The offensive line was average at best last season with All-America center Tyler Linderbaum leading the way, but he has since left for the NFL, so it, too, is a concern.

The biggest strength on offense might be the pass-catchers, led by senior tight end Sam LaPorta, who paced Iowa with 670 receiving yards and 53 catches last season.

At wideout, Keagan Johnson and Arland Bruce IV both played significant roles as true freshmen last season, and both should have even bigger roles this season.


JACK CAMPBELL

Joe Robbins

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	South Dakota State
Sept. 10	Iowa State
Sept. 17	Nevada
Sept. 24	at Rutgers
Oct. 1	Michigan
Oct. 8	at Illinois
Oct. 22	at Ohio State
Oct. 29	Northwestern
Nov. 5	at Purdue
Nov. 12	Wisconsin
Nov. 19	at Minnesota
Nov. 25	Nebraska

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 10-4, 7-2 BIG TEN

Sept. 4	Indiana	W	34-6
Sept. 11	at Iowa State	W	27-17
Sept. 18	Kent State	W	30-7
Sept. 25	Colorado State	W	24-14
Oct. 1	at Maryland	W	51-14
Oct. 9	Penn State	W	23-20
Oct. 16	Purdue	L	7-24
Oct. 30	at Wisconsin	L	7-27
Nov. 6	at Northwestern	W	17-12
Nov. 13	Minnesota	W	27-22
Nov. 20	Illinois	W	33-23
Nov. 26	at Nebraska	W	28-21
Dec. 4	vs. Michigan #	L	3-42
Jan. 1	vs. Kentucky %	L	17-20

#Indianapolis %Citrus Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	B1G	NATIONAL
Scoring	23.4 ppg	10	99
Rushing	123.6 ypg	11	101
Passing	180.1 ypg	8	109
Total	303.7 ypg	13	121
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**B1G**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	19.2 ppg	5	13
Rushing	114.4 ypg	3	13
Passing	214.5 ypg	6	42
Total	328.9 ypg	3	17
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**B1G**	**NATIONAL**
+11	+0.79	1	12

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	34.0	2
Defense	25.6	6
Margin	+8.4	2
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	36.6%	120
Defense	37.7%	16
Margin	-1.1%	83
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	4.8	119
Defense	4.8	6
Margin	+0.0	76
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	3.4	118
Defense	4.3	82
Margin	-0.9	115
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	3.0	28
Actual	12	6
Margin	+9.0	3

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

41.7

Iowa's scoring drives started on average at its own 41.7-yard line. When Iowa started drives inside its own 40, it scored touchdowns on just 12.5 percent of drives.

+16

Iowa gave up 14 turnovers in non-garbage time in 2021, while forcing 30 turnovers. That's a +16 non-garbage time turnover margin on the season, and a +1.24 margin per game, best in the nation.

-0.113

Iowa's offense struggled to move the ball consistently, averaging a -0.113 EPA/play, 123rd nationally in offensive explosiveness. The Hawkeyes went three-and-out on 54 drives last season.

DEFENSE Longtime defensive coordinator Phil Parker has built some great defenses over the years, and this could be one of his best. Three starters return on the defensive line, along with the top three linebackers, including senior middle linebacker Jack Campbell, who led the nation with 143 tackles last season.

Dane Belton's impact will be missed in the secondary, but Parker has a knack for developing star defensive backs. Iowa led the nation with a school-record 25 interceptions last season, with 11 players picking off at least one pass.

Belton is one of three starters in the secondary from last season who have to be replaced, the others being cornerback Matt Hankins and free safety Jack Koerner. But Iowa also has one of the most experienced cornerbacks in the nation returning in fifth-year senior Riley Moss, who has started 27 games and appeared in 41. Moss was named the Big Ten Defensive Back of the Year last season despite missing three games with a left knee injury.

Senior strong safety Kaevon Merriweather also has played extensively over the past two seasons, while junior cornerback Jermari Harris came on strong at the end of last season.

SPECIALISTS First, the good news: Tory Taylor returns as one of the Big Ten's top punters, and Charlie Jones returns as one of the top kick and punt returners in the conference. Taylor averaged 46.1 yards on 80 punts last season. His 80 punts were the most amongst all Big Ten punters. He also had 27 punts that traveled at least 50 yards and 39 that were downed inside the opponent's 20-yard line. Jones was named the Big Ten Return Specialist of the Year last season after averaging 25.4 yards on 25 kick returns and 7.7 yards on 37 punt returns.

The bad news is that Iowa has to replace kicker Caleb Shudak. Aaron Blom, Lucas Amaya and preferred walk-on Drew Stevens were all battling for the No. 1 spot in spring practice.

FINAL ANALYSIS For over two decades, Iowa has sustained a level of success under Ferentz in which winning records and bowl games are expected. The 2022 season should be more of the same, with defense and special teams leading the way to another winning record and bowl appearance.

The question is whether the offense will do its part, or if it will prevent Iowa from climbing to the next level.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)

WR	**6**	**Keagan Johnson (So.)**	29	Jackson Ritter (Jr.)
WR	**89**	**Nico Ragaini (Sr.)**	10	Arland Bruce IV (So.)
LT	**78**	**Mason Richman (So.)**	74	David Davidkov (Fr.)
LG	63	Justin Britt (Jr.)	70	Beau Stephens (Fr.)
C	76	Tyler Elsbury (So.)	54	Matt Fagan (Sr.)
RG	**77**	**Connor Colby (So.)**	75	Josh Volk (So.)
RT	**79**	**Jack Plumb (Sr.)**	**56**	**Nick DeJong (Jr.)**
TE	**84**	**Sam LaPorta (Sr.)**	85	Luke Lachey (So.)
QB	**7**	**Spencer Petras (Sr.)**	8	Alex Padilla (Jr.)
RB	25	Gavin Williams (So.)	4	Leshon Williams (So.)
FB	38	Monte Pottebaum (Sr.)	40	Turner Pallissard (Sr.)

DEFENSE (8)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	**92**	**John Waggoner (Sr.)**	48	Max Llewellyn (Fr.)
DT	**99**	**Noah Shannon (Sr.)**	91	Lukas Van Ness (So.)
DT	**85**	**Logan Lee (Jr.)**	94	Yahya Black (So.)
DE	13	Joe Evans (Sr.)	45	Deontae Craig (So.)
LEO	**5**	**Jestin Jacobs (Jr.)**	29	Sebastian Castro (Jr.)
MLB	**31**	**Jack Campbell (Sr.)**	34	Jay Higgins (Jr.)
WLB	**44**	**Seth Benson (Sr.)**	37	Kyler Fisher (Jr.)
CB	27	Jermari Harris (Jr.)	3	Cooper DeJean (So.)
CB	**33**	**Riley Moss (Sr.)**	2	Terry Roberts (Sr.)
SS	**26**	**Kaevon Merriweather (Sr.)**	29	Sebastian Castro (Jr.)
FS	30	Quinn Schulte (Jr.)	12	Jaxon Rexroth (Fr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	1	Aaron Blom (So.)	KR	16	Charlie Jones (Sr.)
P	9	Tory Taylor (Jr.)	PR	16	Charlie Jones (Sr.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Spencer Petras	**288**	**165**	**1,880**	**10**	**9**
Alex Padilla	**112**	**55**	**636**	**2**	**2**
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Tyler Goodson	256	1,151	4.5	6	
Gavin Williams	**65**	**305**	**4.7**	**0**	
Ivory Kelly-Martin	45	202	4.5	1	
Monte Pottebaum	**15**	**76**	**5.1**	**1**	
Leshon Williams	**21**	**69**	**3.3**	**0**	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Sam LaPorta	**53**	**670**	**12.6**	**3**	
Tyler Goodson	31	247	8.0	1	
Nico Ragaini	**26**	**331**	**12.7**	**1**	
Arland Bruce IV	**25**	**209**	**8.4**	**1**	
Charlie Jones	**21**	**323**	**15.4**	**3**	

KICKING: Caleb Shudak, 24-28 FGs, 108 pts.
TACKLES: **Jack Campbell, 143; Seth Benson, 105**
SACKS: **Joe Evans, 7.0; Lukas Van Ness, 7.0**
INTERCEPTIONS: Dane Belton, 5

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE HAWKEYES

Opposing Coaches Size Up Iowa

"Every year that goes by, it's apparent this staff isn't going anywhere until the head man [Kirk Ferentz] decides to leave. They do what they do, they do it well and they do not care if you think they should do it different. They've got total support, too. So if everyone's calling for the OC's [Brian Ferentz] head, it doesn't really matter. This program moves at its own pace. … They're a model of defense. They're assignment sound, physical up front and they're rarely out of position. When you look at them on film, it's all vanilla. It's hard to see an 'Iowa scheme' in anything. The Iowa part of it is running base stuff with great fundamentals, or playing sound gaps and understanding assignments on the fly. They'll cover your route concepts quickly because they're smart, and they're smart because they're well-coached. That's why you see so many flashier teams with more talent come in there and get brought down to Iowa's pace and style. They command games, even with less talent. … The offensive line was young up front last year, and that showed at times. The issue is going to be production at the quarterback position. They're going to let those guys battle it out. … This program is the definition of overachieving in this sport. Yes, they probably need to be more creative on offense, but they're not listening to the outside, trust me."

MINNESOTA GOLDEN GOPHERS

National Forecast: 38 • Big Ten West Prediction: 4 • Projected Record: 7-5, 4-5 Big Ten

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: P.J. Fleck
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 35-23 (5 years)
CAREER RECORD: 65-45 (9 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Kirk Ciarrocca
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Joe Rossi
LOCATION: Minneapolis, MN
STADIUM: Huntington Bank Stadium (50,805)

KEY GOLDEN GOPHERS

JOHN MICHAEL SCHMITZ, C In a surprise move, the 6'4", 320-pounder declined to turn pro and instead comes back as the highest-graded center in the country. The Rimington Trophy is in his sights.

TANNER MORGAN, QB The steady, dependable field general has weapons at his disposal this season, including fellow sixth-year Gophers Chris Autman-Bell and Mohamed Ibrahim.

MARIANO SORI-MARIN, LB Bouncing back from a down 2020 season, the 6'3", 245-pound linebacker had 85 tackles and will be the man to get the Gophers defense lined up correctly.

KEY LOSSES

BOYE MAFE, DE The Minnesota native was the most disruptive player on the defense a year ago, with seven sacks. His freak athleticism will be missed.

DANIEL FAALELE, OT The mammoth man — checking in at 6'9" and 380 pounds — was counted on as the reliable right tackle. Outside of a COVID opt-out in 2020, he started 31 games.

JACK GIBBENS, LB The Abilene Christian transfer was only at Minnesota for one season, but he left a mark with a team-high 92 tackles, including 4.5 for a loss, as well as three pass breakups and one forced fumble in '21.

RISING STAR

While **MICHAEL DIXON** has played 17 games for Minnesota, it has almost always been in the shadows. This fall, the Gophers have plans to make him a wild card, moving him around their defense — from nickel to safety and possibly as a hybrid linebacker type.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Anthony Smith, DL, Shippensburg, PA	★★★★
2	Trey Bixby, DL, Eden Prairie, MN	★★★★
3	Zach Evans, RB, Rockwall, TX	★★★
4	Hayden Schwartz, DL, Jacksonville, FL	★★★
5	Cade McConnell, OL, Choctaw, OK	★★★
6	Ike White, WR, Baltimore, MD	★★★
7	Jacob Knuth, QB, Harrisburg, SD	★★★
8	Aidan Gousby, ATH, Lehigh Acres, FL	★★★
9	Kristen Hoskins, WR, Alexandria, MN	★★★
10	Rhyland Kelly, CB, Clearwater, FL	★★★
11	Tariq Watson, CB, Harvey, LA	★★★
12	Ashton Beers, OL, Slinger, WI	★★★
13	Coleman Bryson, S, Rabun Gap, GA	★★★
14	Tony Nelson, OT, Tracy, MN	★★★
15	Joey Gerlach, LB, St. Paul, MN	★★★
16	Nathan Jones, TE, Brock, TX	★★★
17	Maverick Baranowski, LB, Port Orange, FL	★★★
18	Spencer Alvarez, OT, Minneapolis, MN	★★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite

The Golden Gophers won nine games last season, a win total seen in program history only four times since 1905. Minnesota beat archrival Wisconsin in the Battle for Paul Bunyan's Axe and shut down West Virginia in the Guaranteed Rate Bowl.

Despite that success, last season left head coach P.J. Fleck saying he was unsuccessful.

"I'm up here telling you I failed as a head coach," Fleck said before spring practices began in March. "I did not do well enough, especially on the offensive side of the ball. We were too inconsistent. We had way too many three-and-outs. It just didn't flow together. That starts with me."

It was clear to see where Minnesota fell short. Losses to Bowling Green and rebuilding Illinois — both in Minneapolis — kept the Gophers from a double-digit-win season similar to 2019.

Yet Fleck's primary point was about Minnesota's passing game, which never got off the ground a year ago and led to a massive postseason change.

OFFENSE Fleck fired offensive coordinator Mike Sanford Jr. after the bowl game and rehired former OC Kirk Ciarrocca, who led Minnesota's best offensive outburst under Fleck in 2019. The Gophers had one of the worst passing attacks in the country last year, ranking 118th in passing yards per game (162.0) and ahead of only the service academies in attempts (257).

"We know we have to improve throwing the football," Ciarrocca says. "I think everybody in the state of Minnesota knows that. I think everybody in the Big Ten, they are hoping we don't."

Minnesota must replace five starters on offense — many of them up front, save for All-Big Ten center John Michael Schmitz.

Schmitz is part of the "Encore Four," a nickname from Fleck for the group returning for sixth seasons. Quarterback Tanner Morgan, receiver Chris Autman-Bell and running back Mohamed Ibrahim are also back for more.

Ibrahim is coming off a ruptured Achilles tendon in the 2021 season opener, and Autman-Bell had injuries nag him a year ago, especially at the start of the campaign.

Besides Autman-Bell's six touchdowns, no other pass-catcher had more than two. In his second year after transferring from Texas A&M, Dylan Wright remains a breakout candidate. The same goes for 6'7" tight end Brevyn Spann-Ford.

Ibrahim isn't the only tailback coming back from a season-ending injury. So are Trey Potts and Bryce Williams, and the pair who stepped in for them — Mar'Keise "Bucky" Irving and Ky Thomas — both transferred out.

A lot will be riding on Morgan bouncing back from his 10-touchdown, nine-interception performance from a year ago. Morgan and Ciarrocca believe they can rekindle the chemistry from 2019.

The skill players should be there, but will the line be able to plug and play?

DEFENSE What a difference a year makes. Going into last season, defensive coordinator Joe Rossi had to answer countless questions on how his unit would bounce back

TANNER MORGAN

Brad Rempel/University of Minnesota

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	New Mexico State
Sept. 10	Western Illinois
Sept. 17	Colorado
Sept. 24	at Michigan State
Oct. 1	Purdue
Oct. 15	at Illinois
Oct. 22	at Penn State
Oct. 29	Rutgers
Nov. 5	at Nebraska
Nov. 12	Northwestern
Nov. 19	Iowa
Nov. 26	at Wisconsin

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 9-4, 6-3 BIG TEN

Sept. 2	Ohio State	L	31-45
Sept. 11	Miami (Ohio)	W	31-26
Sept. 18	at Colorado	W	30-0
Sept. 25	Bowling Green	L	10-14
Oct. 2	at Purdue	W	20-13
Oct. 16	Nebraska	W	30-23
Oct. 23	Maryland	W	34-16
Oct. 30	at Northwestern	W	41-14
Nov. 6	Illinois	L	6-14
Nov. 13	at Iowa	L	22-27
Nov. 20	at Indiana	W	35-14
Nov. 27	Wisconsin	W	23-13
Dec. 28	vs. West Virginia #	W	18-6

#Guaranteed Rate Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	B1G	NATIONAL
Scoring	25.5 ppg	7	83
Rushing	198.1 ypg	3	27
Passing	162.0 ypg	12	118
Total	360.1 ypg	9	99

DEFENSE	PER GAME	B1G	NATIONAL
Scoring	17.3 ppg	2	6
Rushing	97.5 ypg	2	8
Passing	181.2 ypg	2	8
Total	278.8 ypg	2	3

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	B1G	NATIONAL
+4	+0.31	5	40

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	31.5	12
Defense	24.4	2
Margin	+7.1	3
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	42.5%	73
Defense	37.5%	13
Margin	+5.0%	35
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	5.7	79
Defense	4.9	13
Margin	+0.8	45
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	3.9	96
Defense	4.1	66
Margin	-0.2	95
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	2.7	32
Actual	3	41
Margin	+0.3	61

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

34

Minnesota trapped opponents deep and made earning yards difficult. The Gophers ranked second nationally in starting field position allowed (24.4-yard line) and gave up the sixth-fewest plays of 20-plus yards (34) in the FBS.

4.02

Minnesota's defense allowed 26 touchdowns on 47 quality possessions, ranking 105th in allowing 4.02 points per quality possession.

14.9%

Minnesota ran 14.9 percent more than the average team, but that increased volume didn't translate into efficiency. The Gophers ranked just 79th in rushing success rate, at 38.1 percent.

from a below-average 2020 season. Now Rossi is being asked if Minnesota can remain close to being the nationally elite defense it had in 2021.

"Now, I'm on the complete opposite side of that," Rossi says. "We are sitting here saying, last year, they did a great job. That will be a special group in my heart forever. But this is a new one."

Minnesota was in the nation's top 10 in scoring (17.3 points per game) and total defense (278.8 yards per game) in 2021 but must replace four starters.

Those losses are most acute on the defensive line, with six of the top eight players based on snap counts no longer around. Rush end Thomas Rush and 3-technique tackle Trill Carter are the two holdovers. Transfer portal additions will be counted on here: end Lorenza Surgers (Vanderbilt) and Darnell Jefferies (Clemson).

Minnesota also lost its leading tackler, linebacker Jack Gibbens, and its lockdown cornerback, Coney Durr, but veteran Mariano Sori-Marin will step in at middle linebacker, and Justin Walley will look to build on a Freshman All-America campaign at corner a year ago.

Minnesota also added two corners through the portal: Shannon "Beanie" Bishop (WKU) and Ryan Stapp (Abilene Christian). The staff was pleased with how they assimilated during spring ball.

SPECIALISTS Kicker Matthew Trickett made only 68 percent of his field goals (17-of-25) last season and will need to be more consistent in his senior year. Punter Mark Crawford averaged only 41.7 yards per punt, so there is room for him to grow, too. But the bigger area for improvement is in the return game. The Gophers called way too many fair catches. When they did return it, kickoffs ranked 119th in the country, and punts were 60th. Bishop and Stapp are two potential candidates for the roles this season.

FINAL ANALYSIS The Gophers lost to Iowa for a fifth straight time in 2021. Getting past the Hawkeyes remains the biggest hurdle before Minnesota can put real designs on a Big Ten West championship. To get over that hump, the Gophers will need to make strides in the passing offense and not slip too far defensively. They also will need their transfers along both lines and at corner to hit like their portal additions did a year ago.

Fleck had had seven seasons of ascension at Western Michigan and Minnesota until 2020. They bounced back a year ago and will look to avoid it becoming a roller coaster with a second swoon in three seasons.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	5	Dylan Wright (Jr.)	**22**	**Michael Brown-Stephens (Jr.)**
WR	**7**	**Chris Autman-Bell (Sr.)**	1	Ike White (Fr.)
WR	**9**	**Daniel Jackson (Jr.)**	18	Clay Geary (Sr.)
LT	69	Aireontae Ersery (So.)	71	Martes Lewis (So.)
LG	77	Quinn Carroll (So.)	65	Axel Ruschmeyer (Sr.)
C	**60**	**John Michael Schmitz (Sr.)**	66	Nathan Boe (Sr.)
RG	76	Chuck Filiaga (Sr.)	55	Karter Shaw (Sr.)
RT	50	JJ Guedet (Jr.)	73	Tyrell Lawrence (So.)
TE	88	Brevyn Spann-Ford (Sr.)	86	Jameson Geers (Fr.)
QB	**2**	**Tanner Morgan (Sr.)**	8	Athan Kaliakmanis (Fr.)
RB	**24**	**Mohamed Ibrahim (Sr.)**	3	Trey Potts (Jr.)

DEFENSE (7)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	99	Lorenza Surgers (Sr.)	97	Jalen Logan-Redding (So.)
DT	96	Logan Richter (Jr.)	91	Deven Eastern (Fr.)
DT	**1**	**Trill Carter (Jr.)**	90	Darnell Jefferies (Sr.)
DE	8	Thomas Rush (Sr.)	17	Jah Joyner (So.)
LB	**14**	**Braelen Oliver (Sr.)**	45	Cody Lindenberg (So.)
LB	**55**	**Mariano Sori-Marin (Sr.)**	15	Donald Willis (Jr.)
CB	9	Beanie Bishop (Jr.)	**4**	**Terell Smith (Sr.)**
CB	**5**	**Justin Walley (So.)**	22	Ryan Stapp (Jr.)
NB	11	Michael Dixon (Jr.)	7	Solomon Brown (Jr.)
S	**27**	**Tyler Nubin (Sr.)**	25	Darius Green (Fr.)
S	**23**	**Jordan Howden (Sr.)**	11	Michael Dixon (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	95	Matthew Trickett (Sr.)	**KR**	22	Ryan Stapp (Jr.)
P	96	Mark Crawford (Jr.)	**PR**	9	Beanie Bishop (Jr.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Tanner Morgan	**250**	**149**	**2,044**	**10**	**9**
Cole Kramer	**3**	**3**	**62**	**2**	**0**

Rushing	ATT	YDS	AVG	TD
Ky Thomas	166	824	5.0	6
Mar'Keise Irving	133	699	5.3	4
Trey Potts	**112**	**552**	**4.9**	**6**
Bryce Williams	**37**	**186**	**5.0**	**3**
Cole Kramer	**36**	**165**	**4.6**	**2**

Receiving	REC	YDS	AVG	TD
Chris Autman-Bell	**36**	**506**	**14.1**	**6**
Daniel Jackson	**25**	**267**	**10.7**	**1**
Michael Brown-Stephens	**23**	**392**	**17.0**	**1**
Brevyn Spann-Ford	**23**	**296**	**12.9**	**1**
Dylan Wright	**18**	**365**	**20.3**	**2**

KICKING: **Matthew Trickett, 17-25 FGs, 87 pts.**
TACKLES: Jack Gibbens, 92; **Mariano Sori-Marin, 85**
SACKS: Boye Mafe, 7.0
INTERCEPTIONS: **Tyler Nubin, 3**

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE GOLDEN GOPHERS

Opposing Coaches Size Up Minnesota

"Last year, they really seemed to settle into a Big Ten West identity at times. They could look like Wisconsin or Iowa and get all the way up to 70-30 run-pass. They've got the big guys up front, and their primary back can make some big plays if he's fully recovered. That's probably their biggest personnel question. They were really banged up there last year. … Bringing Kirk [Ciarrocca] back makes a ton of sense. We know he'll get back to his bread and butter, a lot of inside and outside zone, a lot of RPO, getting creative and still controlling the clock. … No one really understood why he was treated the way he was at Penn State. He had these guys absolutely firing. The problem is that they don't have those caliber receivers right now. Where are those top-end guys? The [Rashod] Batemans? You haven't seen that with them for a minute. [Tanner] Morgan's always been a solid quarterback. You don't want him winning or losing games on his own, but he's good when he's got weapons. They lose a lot of that OL, so that's certainly something to keep an eye on. … The defensive line will probably take a step back since they're losing NFL talent there, but they didn't get a lot of attention for a really solid overall unit, we thought. They make you keep it in front of them, really solid and smart. … If Ciarrocca and Morgan can click again, and the lines hold, they could have another special year."

NEBRASKA CORNHUSKERS

National Forecast: 54 • Big Ten West Prediction: 5 • Projected Record: 6-6, 4-5 Big Ten

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Scott Frost
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 15-29 (4 years)
CAREER RECORD: 34-36 (6 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mark Whipple
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Erik Chinander
LOCATION: Lincoln, NE
STADIUM: Memorial Stadium (85,458)

KEY CORNHUSKERS

GARRETT NELSON, OLB Energetic, emotional leader who provides pass-rush pressure, leading the Huskers with 11.5 tackles for a loss and five sacks for 38 yards in losses; also had four quarterback hurries.

LUKE REIMER, ILB In addition to leading in tackles, the former walk-on had six tackles for a loss, one sack and six pass breakups, second on the team.

CASEY THOMPSON, QB Started final 10 games at Texas, completing 63.2 percent of his passes for 2,113 yards and 24 touchdowns; had three games accounting for five or more touchdowns.

KEY LOSSES

ADRIAN MARTINEZ, QB Four-year starter, three-time co-captain, set 16 school records including career total offense (10,792 yards) before transferring to Kansas State.

CAM TAYLOR-BRITT, CB Co-captain, second-team All-Big Ten performer and three-year starter left early for the NFL; had 51 tackles, 11 pass breakups, one interception and one blocked kick last season.

JOJO DOMANN, OLB Three-year starter was the third-leading tackler in 2021 despite missing the final two games; had 72 tackles (nine for a loss), two sacks, two forced fumbles, two interceptions and three pass breakups.

RISING STAR

Sophomore defensive tackle **NASH HUTMACHER** played 26 snaps in 11 games last season as a reserve but will be in the regular rotation now. The 6'4", 325-pound Hutmacher, nicknamed "Polar Bear," has strength that's "off the charts," according to assistant coach Mike Dawson. The key is translating that strength to the field.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Jaeden Gould, CB, Oradell, NJ	★★★★
2	Janiran Bonner, WR, Ellenwood, GA	★★★★
3	Decoldest Crawford, WR, Shreveport, LA	★★★
4	Ajay Allen, RB, Monroe, LA	★★★
5	Jalil Martin, ATH, Chicago, IL	★★★
6	Anthony Grant, RB, Buford, GA*	★★★
7	Ernest Hausmann, LB, Columbus, NE	★★★
8	Victor Jones Jr., WR, Orlando, FL	★★★
9	Javier Morton, S, Stone Mountain, GA*	★★★
10	Jake Appleget, Edge, Lincoln, NE	★★★
11	Emmett Johnson, RB, Minneapolis, MN	★★★
12	Richard Torres, QB, San Antonio, TX	★★★
13	Chase Androff, TE, Lakeville, MN	★★★
14	DeShon Singleton, S, Greensburg, LA*	★★★
15	Brodie Tagaloa, TE, Concord, CA	★★★
16	Malcolm Hartzog, CB, Bassfield, MS	★★★
17	Gage Stenger, LB, Omaha, NE	★★★
18	Justin Evans-Jenkins, OL, Irvington, NJ	★★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite *junior college transfer

Jimmy Buffett's song "Changes in Latitudes, Changes in Attitudes" might be appropriate background music for Nebraska in 2022 — at least the song's title is apropos. Head coach Scott Frost's contract has been restructured, and all but one of his offensive coaches are new, along with a coach strictly focused on special teams.

Plus, Frost is no longer his own offensive coordinator, spending more time with other responsibilities. Mark Whipple, who also coaches the quarterbacks, is the offensive coordinator, coming from Pittsburgh.

Such things happen when you have yet to post a winning record in four seasons, with last year's 3–9 marking the Huskers' worst by percentage since 1957. Even so, believe it or not, 2021 came close to being a winning season. Eight of Nebraska's losses were by a single score, and the ninth, against then-No. 6 Ohio State, ended with a 26–17 score — and it was closer than that.

Another significant change is the departure via the transfer portal of quarterback Adrian Martinez.

OFFENSE The conclusion, statistically, would seem to be that Nebraska had success in 2021. The Huskers outrushed, outpassed and outscored the opposition. Nevertheless, Frost fired all of his offensive assistants except tight ends coach Sean Beckton with two games remaining. He wasn't planning a dramatic restructure of the offense, Frost said, just some tweaking under Whipple. But it's been more than that. With the new assistants and a new quarterback, rooms full of running backs and receivers during the spring and some reworking in the line, the offense will certainly look different.

Quarterback has drawn the most attention with Martinez's departure. Texas transfer Casey Thompson, easily the most experienced quarterback, is accustomed to learning new systems. He'll be in charge.

Center Cam Jurgens left early, leaving a hole in the center of the line, while tackles Teddy Prochazka and Turner Corcoran, key parts of the line, missed spring practice with injuries. Nouredin Nouili is solid at left guard. Trent Hixson has starting experience at center. New offensive line coach Donovan Raiola has emphasized aggressiveness and getting off the ball.

Omar Manning is the leading returning receiver, with 26 catches for 380 yards and two touchdowns. More is expected of him and from Alante Brown, who saw limited action last season.

In the spring, Beckton had to work with a group of tight ends beset by injuries, as well as deal with the early departure of Austin Allen for the NFL. Travis Vokolek is experienced and is a leader. The tight ends are going to be more involved in the passing game in the new system.

Rahmir Johnson is the most experienced running back, averaging 4.4 yards per attempt last season.

DEFENSE Four of the top five tacklers return: inside linebackers Luke Reimer and Nick Henrich, outside linebacker Garrett Nelson and cornerback Quinton Newsome. That's the good news.

GARRETT NELSON

Nebraska Athletics

2022 SCHEDULE

Aug. 27	vs. Northwestern #
Sept. 3	North Dakota
Sept. 10	Georgia Southern
Sept. 17	Oklahoma
Oct. 1	Indiana
Oct. 7	at Rutgers
Oct. 15	at Purdue
Oct. 29	Illinois
Nov. 5	Minnesota
Nov. 12	at Michigan
Nov. 19	Wisconsin
Nov. 25	at Iowa

#Dublin, Ireland

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 3-9, 1-8 BIG TEN

Aug. 28	at Illinois	L	22-30
Sept. 4	Fordham	W	52-7
Sept. 11	Buffalo	W	28-3
Sept. 18	at Oklahoma	L	16-23
Sept. 25	at Michigan State	L	20-23
Oct. 2	Northwestern	W	56-7
Oct. 9	Michigan	L	29-32
Oct. 16	at Minnesota	L	23-30
Oct. 30	Purdue	L	23-28
Nov. 6	Ohio State	L	17-26
Nov. 20	at Wisconsin	L	28-35
Nov. 26	Iowa	L	21-28

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	B1G	NATIONAL
Scoring	27.9 ppg	6	70
Rushing	181.2 ypg	4	45
Passing	266.4 ypg	5	27
Total	447.6 ypg	2	20
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**B1G**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	22.7 ppg	8	36
Rushing	146.9 ypg	7	58
Passing	219.1 ypg	9	53
Total	366.0 ypg	7	47
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**B1G**	**NATIONAL**
-5	-0.42	11	98

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	25.8	122
Defense	29.1	72
Margin	-3.3	108
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	43.9%	58
Defense	43.5%	84
Margin	+0.4%	69
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	6.5	22
Defense	5.4	41
Margin	+1.1	24
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.2	63
Defense	3.1	9
Margin	+1.1	8
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	-0.1	70
Actual	-5	94
Margin	-4.9	110

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

6.22

How close were the Cornhuskers to having a decent season? Nebraska lost nine games in 2021, but all nine of the team's losses came by single digits. The Cornhuskers' average margin in losses was 6.22 points.

0.161

Nebraska's passing offense ranked 26th in explosiveness in 2021, averaging 0.161 EPA/play. Nevertheless, the Huskers had only 57 total plays of 20-plus yards (86th).

46.8%

The Cornhuskers limited opponents to quality possessions on 46.8 percent of drives, the 53rd-best figure in the nation.

Reimer led with 108 tackles. Henrich, the more vocal of the two, made 99 tackles. The plan is to get Reimer and Henrich more breathers, something that's been difficult because of so many close games. Nelson is a proven playmaker, with the most starting experience.

Outside linebacker Caleb Tannor is the only other returner who started every game. That's the bad news.

The defensive line had to be rebuilt under new coach Mike Dawson, who now works with both the line and outside linebackers following the departure of Tony Tuioti. The line has centered around tackle Ty Robinson, who had four starts. Casey Rogers, who also had starting experience, unexpectedly entered the transfer portal in late April. The Huskers, in turn, took advantage of the portal, landing end Ochaun Mathis from TCU, who is expected to step in immediately.

The secondary was a strength last season. Now only Newsome and safety Myles Farmer have starting experience, and corner Braxton Clark is the only other defensive back with significant playing time.

The defensive statistics weren't flashy in 2021. Nebraska ranked ninth in the Big Ten in total defense and scoring defense (conference games only). But the unit consistently made stops in critical situations, offsetting mistakes by the offense and contributing significantly to the Huskers' tight scoring margins. Don't expect the rebuilt defense to be as effective. The first concern is up front, stopping the run.

SPECIALISTS Bill Busch, a defensive analyst last season, is the special teams coordinator, a role he had at Nebraska from 2004 to 2007. Two rankings stand out and help to explain Busch's focus. The Huskers were 124th in kickoff returns and tied for 128th in punt returns. LSU transfer Trey Palmer can provide help in either or both. Another transfer, Brian Buschini, was the top FCS punter at Montana, averaging 45.8 yards on 75 career punts. The only way here is up.

FINAL ANALYSIS In addition to the pressure to produce a winning record, there are questions up front defensively as well as offensively. Ohio State and Michigan State are off the schedule, replaced by Indiana and Rutgers, probably a positive. Plus, after an opener against Northwestern in Dublin, Ireland, the Huskers have four home games and a chance to build some momentum going into the heart of the Big Ten schedule. Can they finally have a winning season under Frost? Under the circumstances, they must.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (4)				
WR	4	Alante Brown (So.)	85	Wyatt Liewer (Jr.)
WR	3	Trey Palmer (Jr.)	32	Brody Belt (Jr.)
WR	5	Omar Manning (Sr.)	89	Oliver Martin (Sr.)
LT	65	Teddy Prochazka (So.)	74	Brant Banks (So.)
LG	**63**	**Nouredin Nouili (Jr.)**	72	Kevin Williams Jr. (Sr.)
C	57	Ethan Piper (So.)	75	Trent Hixson (Sr.)
RG	73	Broc Bando (Sr.)	66	Ezra Miller (So.)
RT	**69**	**Turner Corcoran (So.)**	**54**	**Bryce Benhart (So.)**
TE	83	Travis Vokolek (Sr.)	86	AJ Rollins (Fr.)
QB	11	Casey Thompson (Jr.)	8	Logan Smothers (So.)
RB	**14**	**Rahmir Johnson (So.)**	0	Jaquez Yant (So.)
DEFENSE (5)			Returning Starters in **BOLD**	
DE	52	Mosai Newsom (So.)	50	Jailen Weaver (Fr.)
DT	99	Ty Robinson (So.)	72	Nash Hutmacher (So.)
DE		Ochaun Mathis (Sr.)	82	Colton Feist (Jr.)
OLB	**44**	**Garrett Nelson (Jr.)**	10	Jimari Butler (Fr.)
ILB	**28**	**Luke Reimer (Jr.)**	31	Chris Kolarevic (Sr.)
ILB	**42**	**Nick Henrich (So.)**	22	Eteva Mauga-Clements (Sr.)
OLB	**2**	**Caleb Tannor (Sr.)**	97	Blaise Gunnerson (Fr.)
CB	**6**	**Quinton Newsome (Jr.)**	8	Jaeden Gould (Fr.)
CB	11	Braxton Clark (Jr.)	12	Marques Buford Jr. (So.)
S	4	Myles Farmer (So.)	9	DeShon Singleton (So.)
S	23	Isaac Gifford (So.)	21	Noa Pola-Gates (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	36	Chase Contreraz (Jr.)	**KR**	3	Trey Palmer (Jr.)
P	95	Brian Buschini (So.)	**PR**	3	Trey Palmer (Jr.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Adrian Martinez	306	189	2,863	14	10
Logan Smothers	**33**	**23**	**317**	**0**	**1**
Matt Masker	**3**	**3**	**17**	**0**	**0**
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Adrian Martinez	133	525	3.9	13	
Rahmir Johnson	**112**	**495**	**4.4**	**4**	
Jaquez Yant	**47**	**294**	**6.3**	**1**	
Markese Stepp	**45**	**177**	**3.9**	**2**	
Logan Smothers	**37**	**133**	**3.6**	**2**	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Samori Toure	46	898	19.5	5	
Austin Allen	38	602	15.8	2	
Omar Manning	**26**	**380**	**14.6**	**2**	
Zavier Betts	**20**	**286**	**14.3**	**0**	
Levi Falck	18	223	12.4	1	

KICKING: Connor Culp, 6-12 FGs, 46 pts.
TACKLES: **Luke Reimer, 108; Nick Henrich, 99**
SACKS: **Garrett Nelson, 5.0**
INTERCEPTIONS: Deontai Williams, 4

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE CORNHUSKERS

Opposing Coaches Size Up Nebraska

"In their division, Nebraska still has the best-looking roster. We call it the all-bus team because they look better than anyone else in the West in pregame. Long, tall dudes, really athletic, and then after a quarter or so, you stop worrying because they're usually hurting themselves. They struggle with turnovers, they struggle with technique. I think it's a culture issue. … Defensively they improved, but they lost some of their better guys to eligibility and they filled it with transfers. … We ask ourselves a lot what's going on there because they're pulling in good talent and have the resources, and the administration seems to have faith in this staff. … With the new OC and the do-or-die mentality, they have to manage the summer really well and find the right QB. My guess is that Mark Whipple's going to take over the room. He's a headstrong guy. … The biggest thing they need to do is get the OL to a point where they can run the ball long enough to let the defense breathe. That defense isn't the problem; they were solid as hell at times. The offense just needed to stay on the field and not burn quick possessions, not go tempo and get desperate because you're playing from behind. … Obviously, this is a big year for them. They're talented enough, but is there some kind of mental block here? If they can't come out and win and show some signs that they can build around what they're doing, this is probably it."

NORTHWESTERN WILDCATS

National Forecast: 83 • Big Ten West Prediction: 7 • Projected Record: 4-8, 1-8 Big Ten

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Pat Fitzgerald
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 109-90 (16 years)
CAREER RECORD: 109-90 (16 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mike Bajakian
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jim O'Neil
LOCATION: Evanston, IL
STADIUM: Ryan Field (47,130)

KEY WILDCATS

ADETOMIWA ADEBAWORE, DE Top pass rusher has 7.5 career sacks and consistently pressured the pocket in 2021, leading the team in sacks (4.5), TFLs (8.5) and QB pressures (12).

PETER SKORONSKI, LT Two-year starter, All-Big Ten selection and projected NFL first-round draft pick returns to anchor the line in what should be his final college season.

EVAN HULL, RB Replaced the injured Cam Porter and rushed for 1,009 yards and seven touchdowns, bringing his career yards-per-carry average to 5.6.

KEY LOSSES

CHRIS BERGIN, LB Second-team All-Big Ten selection and three-year starter led the FBS in tackles per game (11.8) while recording 30 more solo tackles than anyone on the team.

BRANDON JOSEPH, S All-America selection in 2020 led the team last season in interceptions (three) and finished third in tackles (80), earning second-team All-Big Ten honors, before transferring to Notre Dame.

STEPHON ROBINSON JR., WR The Kansas transfer was one of Northwestern's only consistent pass-catching threats last season, leading the team in both receptions (46) and receiving yards (625).

RISING STAR

Northwestern needs help at linebacker, and **MAC UIHLEIN** should provide a boost for the Wildcats defense with increased playing time. The 6'1" 215-pound Uihlein was the highest-rated inside linebacker recruit in team history. He has excellent speed and will help against the run and with creating negative plays.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Reggie Fleurima, WR, Naperville, IL	★★★★
2	Anto Saka, Edge, Towson, MD	★★★★
3	Austin Firestone, DL, Niceville, FL	★★★
4	Danny McGuire, OT, Chicago, IL	★★★
5	Braydon Brus, ATH, Glendora, CA	★★★
6	Nick Herzog, OT, Stilwell, KS	★★★
7	Joseph Himon II, RB, Little Rock, AR	★★★
8	Kenny Soares, LB, Avon, CT	★★★
9	Robert Fitzgerald, S, Dallas, TX	★★★
10	Chris Petrucci, TE, Park Ridge, IL	★★★
11	Evan Smith, ATH, Birmingham, AL	★★★
12	Devin Turner, S, Frisco, TX	★★★
13	Jason Reynolds, LB, McDonough, GA	★★★
14	Braden Turner, CB, Mobile, AL	★★★
15	Brendan Flakes, DL, Winter Gardens, FL	★★★
16	Jack Lausch, QB, Oak Lawn, IL	★★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite

From 2008 to 2017, Northwestern was one of college football's most consistently solid programs. The Wildcats averaged 7.7 wins during that stretch, peaking with three 10-win seasons and never falling below five victories. The Wildcats weren't an annual Big Ten title contender, but they were always a team to contend with in the West Division.

The past four seasons have alternated between the most notable achievements (two division titles, one top-10 finish) and poorest records (3–9) of head coach Pat Fitzgerald's tenure. Northwestern truly bottomed out last fall, finishing last in the Big Ten in points scored and 12th in points allowed.

Northwestern is seeking stability again and needs significant upgrades in several areas, including quarterback play and run defense.

"We gave it away last year," Fitzgerald says. "When you watch our line-of-scrimmage play, or our inability to take care of the ball, take it away, that's when we've been consistently successful. Our theme for the offseason is, 'You've got to earn it.' We've got to earn what we value and who we are."

OFFENSE Coordinator Mike Bajakian desperately needs more explosiveness and fewer mistakes, especially at quarterback. South Carolina transfer Ryan Hilinski enters his second season but has gone through his first winter program in Evanston. He will be pushed by sophomore Brendan Sullivan and junior Carl Richardson.

"Last year might as well have been a freshman year," Fitzgerald says of Hilinski. "You can definitely tell he's further along in the system, in his confidence. We've got a great competition going on right now."

The Wildcats need a major boost from their receivers. Getting both Bryce Kirtz and Malik Washington healthy will help, and Jacob Gill could emerge after showing flashes as a true freshman. Northwestern added Illinois transfer Donny Navarro III (52 career receptions) and will remain active in the portal. Charlie Mangieri and Marshall Lang will handle the tight end spot.

The run game will remain Northwestern's strength, especially with Cam Porter's return from an ACL injury. Porter and Evan Hull, who rushed for 1,009 yards as the 2021 starter, form an excellent backfield combination along with reserves Andrew Clair and Anthony Tyus III. They will operate behind a line featuring tackle Peter Skoronski, an All-America candidate, veterans Ethan Wiederkehr and Charlie Schmidt, Colorado State transfer Vince Picozzi and others. "That's a really special group of guys," Fitzgerald says of the running backs. "They're going to give us a chance to be highly competitive."

DEFENSE The unit backslid sharply under first-year coordinator Jim O'Neil, dropping from fifth nationally in points allowed in 2020 to 89th last year. Despite external criticism about the scheme, Fitzgerald says there wasn't a philosophical shift but more of a change in terminology. Several career backups didn't perform well when thrust into the lineup, and Northwestern was gashed from the first play of the season onward.

ADETOMIWA ADEBAWORE

Peter Brouillet

2022 SCHEDULE

Aug. 27	vs. Nebraska #
Sept. 10	Duke
Sept. 17	Southern Illinois
Sept. 24	Miami (Ohio)
Oct. 1	at Penn State
Oct. 8	Wisconsin
Oct. 22	at Maryland
Oct. 29	at Iowa
Nov. 5	Ohio State
Nov. 12	at Minnesota
Nov. 19	at Purdue
Nov. 26	Illinois

#Dublin, Ireland

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 3-9, 1-8 BIG TEN

Sept. 3	Michigan State	L	21-38
Sept. 11	Indiana State	W	24-6
Sept. 18	at Duke	L	23-30
Sept. 25	Ohio	W	35-6
Oct. 2	at Nebraska	L	7-56
Oct. 16	Rutgers	W	21-7
Oct. 23	at Michigan	L	7-33
Oct. 30	Minnesota	L	14-41
Nov. 6	Iowa	L	12-17
Nov. 13	at Wisconsin	L	7-35
Nov. 20	vs. Purdue #	L	14-32
Nov. 27	at Illinois	L	14-47

#Chicago

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	B1G	NATIONAL
Scoring	16.6 ppg	14	125
Rushing	144.2 ypg	8	82
Passing	177.3 ypg	9	111
Total	321.6 ypg	11	116

DEFENSE	PER GAME	B1G	NATIONAL
Scoring	29.0 ppg	12	89
Rushing	213.0 ypg	14	119
Passing	216.5 ypg	8	46
Total	429.5 ypg	13	101

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	B1G	NATIONAL
-6	-0.50	13	106

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		Rank
Offense	26.4	118
Defense	31.4	108
Margin	-5.0	117

Efficiency[2]		Rank
Offense	37.7%	114
Defense	46.2%	108
Margin	-8.6%	116

Explosiveness[3]		Rank
Offense	4.8	120
Defense	6.3	107
Margin	-1.5	116

Finishing Drives[4]		Rank
Offense	3.2	126
Defense	4.3	84
Margin	-1.1	119

Adjusted TO Margin[5]		Rank
Projected	-5.9	128
Actual	-6	100
Margin	-0.1	66

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

-0.067

Northwestern ranked 119th in offensive explosiveness in 2021, averaging -0.067 EPA/play. The offense finished drives almost as poorly as any other Power 5 team, ranking 122nd in points per quality possession (3.66).

6.03

Opponents faced an average third-down distance of 6.03 yards to go against Northwestern, fourth shortest in the nation. Opponents converted 44.9 percent of third-down attempts against the Wildcats, ranking them 85th.

43

The Wildcats allowed 43 plays of 20-plus yards, ranking 25th among FBS teams.

Northwestern's secondary projects well despite safety Brandon Joseph's transfer to Notre Dame. Cornerbacks Cameron Mitchell and A.J. Hampton Jr. and safety Coco Azema are experienced options, and Rod Heard II likely will see the field as a fifth defensive back. Northwestern also added Duke cornerback transfer Jeremiah Lewis. "We have high expectations for that group," Fitzgerald says.

Bryce Gallagher will lead the linebackers, who need other playmakers to emerge. Junior Xander Mueller and sophomore Mac Uihlein are both worth watching, along with Pittsburgh transfer Wendell Davis, although Northwestern might end up using only two linebackers.

Northwestern hit the transfer portal along the defensive line, adding Taishan Holmes (UMass), Ryan Johnson (Stanford) and Henrik Barndt (Indiana State). They join veteran returnees such as end Adetomiwa Adebawore and tackles Jordan Butler and Jason Gold Jr. The Wildcats should have enough pass-rushing help but must stop the run better this fall.

SPECIALISTS The offense's scoring struggles place a premium on better placekicking, where junior Jack Olsen will get the first chance to replace four-year starter Charlie Kuhbander. UCLA transfer Luke Akers, the son of NFL kicker David Akers, will handle the punting duties. Raymond Niro III and Azema likely will handle punt and kickoff returns, which could be a strength this fall.

FINAL ANALYSIS Northwestern has an important opener against Nebraska in Ireland, a navigable September and a very tough midseason stretch beginning Oct. 1 at Penn State.

Fitzgerald hopes that a roster with more game experience, both through returnees and transfers, will generate across-the-board improvement. Although Northwestern handled the 2020 COVID season extremely well, the critical in-house development that was lost that year took its toll on the 2021 team. A normal offseason could lead to more normalized results this fall, which means improvement along both lines, in the turnover margin and in the red zone. Northwestern also must get something out of its passing game.

"Where we got exposed the most is just in physicality with the way we typically play," Fitzgerald says. "That was a byproduct of not being [together].

"We're a totally different team today than we were at this time last year."

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

WR	**6**	**Malik Washington (Sr.)**		Donny Navarro III (Sr.)
WR	17	Bryce Kirtz (Jr.)	14	Donnie Gray (So.)
WR	5	Jacob Gill (So.)	23	Raymond Niro III (Sr.)
LT	**77**	**Peter Skoronski (Jr.)**	72	Caleb Tiernan (So.)
LG	**68**	**Josh Priebe (Jr.)**	63	Dom D'Antonio (Jr.)
C	**69**	**Charlie Schmidt (Sr.)**	65	Jackson Carsello (So.)
RG	75	Vince Picozzi (Sr.)	71	Ben Wrather (Jr.)
RT	**76**	**Ethan Wiederkehr (Sr.)**	72	Caleb Tiernan (So.)
TE	**89**	**Charlie Mangieri (Sr.)**	88	Marshall Lang (Jr.)
QB	3	Ryan Hilinski (Jr.)	10	Brendan Sullivan (So.)
RB	**26**	**Evan Hull (Jr.)**	4	Cam Porter (Jr.)

DEFENSE (5)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	**99**	**Adetomiwa Adebawore (Sr.)**	91	Aidan Hubbard (So.)
DT	90	Taishan Holmes (Jr.)	52	Jordan Butler (Jr.)
DT	94	Jason Gold Jr. (Sr.)	54	Henrik Barndt (Sr.)
DE	97	Sean McLaughlin (Jr.)	8	Ryan Johnson (Sr.)
LB	34	Xander Mueller (Jr.)	57	Greyson Metz (Jr.)
LB	**32**	**Bryce Gallagher (Jr.)**	44	Khalid Jones (Sr.)
LB	4	Wendell Davis (Sr.)	37	Mac Uihlein (So.)
CB	**2**	**Cameron Mitchell (Jr.)**	24	Rod Heard II (Jr.)
CB	**11**	**A.J. Hampton Jr. (Sr.)**	9	Jeremiah Lewis (Sr.)
S	3	Jaheem Joseph (Jr.)	20	Trent Carrington (Sr.)
S	**0**	**Coco Azema (Jr.)**	21	Tyler Haskins (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	92	Jack Olsen (Jr.)	**KR**	0	Coco Azema (Jr.)
P	47	Luke Akers (So.)	**PR**	23	Raymond Niro III (Sr.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Ryan Hilinski	**176**	**95**	**978**	**3**	**4**
Andrew Marty	110	66	707	6	6
Hunter Johnson	75	45	424	4	4
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Evan Hull	**196**	**1,009**	**5.1**	**7**	
Andrew Clair	**63**	**349**	**5.5**	**1**	
Anthony Tyus III	**50**	**210**	**4.2**	**1**	
Stephon Robinson Jr.	10	120	12.0	0	
Andrew Marty	51	101	2.0	1	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Stephon Robinson Jr.	46	625	13.6	2	
Malik Washington	**44**	**578**	**13.1**	**2**	
Evan Hull	**33**	**264**	**8.0**	**2**	
Bryce Kirtz	**19**	**203**	**10.7**	**0**	
Marshall Lang	**11**	**68**	**6.2**	**3**	

KICKING: Charlie Kuhbander, 6-13 FGs, 39 pts.
TACKLES: Chris Bergin, 141; **Bryce Gallagher, 89**
SACKS: **Adetomiwa Adebawore, 4.5**
INTERCEPTIONS: Brandon Joseph, 3

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE WILDCATS

Opposing Coaches Size Up Northwestern

"Looking at this team from year to year, it's pretty much a broken record now: You know exactly what you're getting on defense, and you respect the hell out of it, and you have no idea what's coming on offense, but chances are it will be pretty bad. … The more time you spend in this league, the more you respect Fitz [Pat Fitzgerald] as a program manager. Their guys model their play off the head coach. He has great culture, and he has great communication within the program. … Defensively, they're great; they like to get after you in the secondary, and when they have experience up front, they can give you hell. … The issue with the program is how inconsistent they've become with the offense. It's not a mystery: There's no consistency with the running back and quarterback, and there's not enough talent at receiver. If the [Ryan] Hilinski kid is their guy, they need to ride with him. … The good news is that they're maybe the best in the nation at changing circumstances quickly. They've had bad seasons that were a series of single-possession losses, and the next year they're efficient enough on offense to come right back and get on a run. That's possible this season, too, although they're drawing a pretty nasty schedule. Finding an established starter at quarterback could get them to .500, and that would be a huge success building towards the future."

PURDUE BOILERMAKERS

National Forecast: 31 • Big Ten West Prediction: 2 • Projected Record: 8-4, 6-3 Big Ten

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Jeff Brohm
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 28-29 (5 years)
CAREER RECORD: 58-39 (8 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Brian Brohm
DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Ron English, Mark Hagen
LOCATION: West Lafayette, IN
STADIUM: Ross-Ade Stadium (57,282)

KEY BOILERMAKERS

PAYNE DURHAM, TE A big target in the red zone, Durham had six TD catches to top all Big Ten TEs in 2021.

AIDAN O'CONNELL, QB O'Connell passed for 3,712 yards and 28 TDs in 2021 to earn second-team All-Big Ten honors.

JALEN GRAHAM, S Graham will be counted on to lead Purdue's defense after posting 64 tackles, four tackles for a loss, a sack and two interceptions last season.

KEY LOSSES

DAVID BELL, WR Bell declared for the NFL Draft after earning Big Ten Receiver of the Year honors with 1,286 yards and six TDs last season.

GEORGE KARLAFTIS, DE Karlaftis declared for the NFL Draft after a junior season in 2021 that included 11.5 tackles for a loss and five sacks.

ZANDER HORVATH, RB With 320 yards rushing and 108 yards receiving, Horvath was a versatile threat in Purdue's offense.

RISING STAR

WR/RB **TYRONE TRACY**, a transfer from Iowa, caught a TD pass in the spring game and will line up both in the slot and out of the backfield in Purdue's offense. At 6'1" and 205 pounds, Tracy has the speed and playmaking ability to thrive in Jeff Brohm's offense.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Brady Allen, QB, Fort Branch, IN	★★★★
2	Nic Caraway, DL, Bryan, TX	★★★★
3	Joe Strickland, DL, Indianapolis, IN	★★★★
4	Curtis Deville Jr., WR, Iowa, LA	★★★
5	Kentrell Marks, RB, Cleveland, OH	★★★
6	Joseph Jefferson II, S, Indianapolis, IN	★★★
7	Malachi Preciado, OL, New Orleans, LA	★★★
8	Zion Steptoe, WR, Frisco, TX	★★★
9	Charlie Kenrich, TE, Middletown, OH	★★★
10	Roman Pitre, ATH, Baton Rouge, LA	★★★
11	Terence Thomas, ATH, Youngstown, OH	★★★
12	Jordan Buchanan, S, Suwanee, GA	★★★
13	Max Klare, TE, Cincinnati, OH	★★★
14	Cross Watson, OT, Portage, MI	★★★
15	André Oben, OT, Jersey City, NJ	★★★
16	Vince Carpenter, OT, Red Bank, NJ	★★★
17	Jimmy Liston, OL, Oak Park, IL	★★★
18	J.P. Deeter, DL, Manvel, TX	★★★
19	Domanick Moon, LB, Fort Wayne, IN	★★★
20	Mo Omonode, DL, West Lafayette, IN	★★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite

A season that began with modest expectations wound up a breakthrough year for Purdue football in 2021.

Purdue capped a nine-win season, its highest win total since 2003, by beating Tennessee 48–45 in a wild overtime shootout at the Music City Bowl. Other big wins included an upset at No. 2 Iowa and an upset of No. 5 Michigan State at home. Purdue was in the mix for the Big Ten West Division title until the last week of the season but fell a game short of Iowa in the final standings.

The challenge for Purdue head coach Jeff Brohm in his sixth year is to build off that success even after losing his best offensive player, Big Ten Wide Receiver of the Year David Bell, and best defensive player, defensive lineman George Karlaftis, to the NFL Draft. The return of second-team All-Big Ten quarterback Aidan O'Connell gives the Boilermakers experience and stability at their most important position, but there will be plenty of position battles that will be determined through the grind of fall camp.

OFFENSE O'Connell, back for his third season as a starter, possesses the arm strength and intelligence to run Brohm's intricate, high-powered offense. Purdue's passing offense has ranked either first or second in the Big Ten in the last four seasons under Brohm, including in 2021, when the Boilermakers finished second behind Ohio State at 355.4 yards per game.

O'Connell will have some new receivers to work with, including Iowa transfer Tyrone Tracy, who could help make up some of the lost production from Bell's departure. Another returning receiver, senior Milton Wright (57 catches, 732 yards, seven TDs in 2021), sat out the Music City Bowl and spring for academic reasons and may or may not be back in 2022. Senior receiver Broc Thompson had a breakout game in the Music City Bowl with seven catches for 217 yards and two TDs but didn't practice in the spring because he's recovering from surgery on both knees. Receivers TJ Sheffield (36 catches, 325 yards, five TDs) and Mershawn Rice (six catches, 69 yards, one TD) will take on increased roles in the offense, as will sophomore Deion Burks, who will line up in the slot.

Purdue is stacked at the tight end position, with Payne Durham (45 catches, 467 yards, six TDs), Garrett Miller and Paul Piferi all returning. In the run game, Purdue brings back leading rusher King Doerue (135 carries, 533 yards, two TDs), who has averaged 3.7 yards per carry in three seasons with the Boilermakers. Dylan Downing and Indiana transfer Sampson James will back up Doerue. James, a former four-star recruit who committed to Ohio State before rushing for 371 yards and three TDs in two seasons with the Hoosiers, broke off some impressive runs during Purdue's spring game.

The offensive line is a veteran unit that includes bookend tackles Cam Craig and Eric Miller and center Gus Hartwig. Sophomore guard Marcus Mbow and sophomore tackle Mahamane Moussa impressed coaches during spring drills and will be key performers up front.

PAYNE DURHAM

Kyle Okita/Cal Sport Media via AP Images

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	Penn State
Sept. 10	Indiana State
Sept. 17	at Syracuse
Sept. 24	Florida Atlantic
Oct. 1	at Minnesota
Oct. 8	at Maryland
Oct. 15	Nebraska
Oct. 22	at Wisconsin
Nov. 5	Iowa
Nov. 12	at Illinois
Nov. 19	Northwestern
Nov. 26	at Indiana

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 9-4, 6-3 BIG TEN

Sept. 4	Oregon State	W	30-21
Sept. 11	at UConn	W	49-0
Sept. 18	at Notre Dame	L	13-27
Sept. 25	Illinois	W	13-9
Oct. 2	Minnesota	L	13-20
Oct. 16	at Iowa	W	24-7
Oct. 23	Wisconsin	L	13-30
Oct. 30	at Nebraska	W	28-23
Nov. 6	Michigan State	W	40-29
Nov. 13	at Ohio State	L	31-59
Nov. 20	vs. Northwestern #	W	32-14
Nov. 27	Indiana	W	44-7
Dec. 30	vs. Tennessee % (ot)	W	48-45

#Chicago %Music City Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	B1G	NATIONAL
Scoring	29.1 ppg	5	59
Rushing	84.2 ypg	14	127
Passing	355.4 ypg	2	5
Total	439.6 ypg	5	33

DEFENSE	PER GAME	B1G	NATIONAL
Scoring	22.4 ppg	7	34
Rushing	157.9 ypg	12	77
Passing	208.7 ypg	5	33
Total	366.6 ypg	8	48

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	B1G	NATIONAL
-3	-0.23	10	83

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	28.0	91
Defense	30.2	94
Margin	-2.2	95
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	45.3%	40
Defense	40.4%	48
Margin	+4.9%	36
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	5.9	69
Defense	5.7	72
Margin	+0.2	70
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.2	59
Defense	3.8	42
Margin	+0.4	51
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	3.5	16
Actual	-2	78
Margin	-5.5	112

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

45.9%

Purdue's passing success rate of 45.9 percent ranked 11th among all offenses in 2021; the Boilermakers averaged 15.0 yards per successful pass.

37.1%

Purdue held opponents to a 37.1 percent third-down conversion rate, 19th best of all FBS defenses. Opponents faced an average distance of 7.24 yards to go on third downs against Purdue.

57

Despite holding opponents to a -0.021 EPA/play (27th in the FBS), the Boilermaker defense allowed 57 plays of 20-plus yards, 28th most of any defense in college football.

DEFENSE Ron English and Mark Hagen will serve as co-defensive coordinators, as Brad Lambert departed after one season to take over as defensive coordinator at Wake Forest. English will call the plays, becoming the fourth different Purdue play-caller on defense in the last four seasons. With Lambert calling plays last season, Purdue's defense showed marked improvement, ranking seventh in the Big Ten in scoring defense (22.4 ppg) and eighth in total defense (366.6 ypg).

English and Hagen will run a 4-2-5 alignment with playmaker Jalen Graham as the up safety. There's talent in the secondary, with safeties Cam Allen and Chris Jefferson also returning, along with cornerback Cory Trice, a big corner at 6'3", 215 pounds who has three career interceptions. Jamari Brown and Indiana transfer Reese Taylor will battle for the other starting cornerback job.

Auburn transfer OC Brothers (3.5 tackles for a loss in 2021) will enter his second season for the Boilermakers and will start at one of the linebacker spots with super senior Semisi Fakasiieiki. The defensive line loses two talented pass rushers in Karlaftis (five sacks) and DaMarcus Mitchell (four sacks), but there is hope that returning defensive end Kydran Jenkins and Murray State transfer Scotty Humpich can pick up some of the slack. The 6'1", 270-pound Jenkins was a pleasant surprise as a freshman with five sacks, while Humpich posted seven sacks in three seasons at Murray State. Purdue has plenty of experience on the interior of the defensive line, with Branson Deen and Lawrence Johnson both back for their second straight seasons as starting defensive tackles.

SPECIALISTS Starting kicker Mitchell Fineran returns after leading the Boilermakers in points (112) last season. Fineran went 24-of-29 on field-goal attempts. Jack Ansell is back at punter after averaging 38.3 yards per punt, including 13 downed inside the 20-yard line. In the return game, Purdue has options with Sheffield, Burks and Taylor all capable on punts and kickoffs.

FINAL ANALYSIS Purdue will need impact players to develop to make up for the losses of Bell and Karlaftis. O'Connell should thrive in his third season running Brohm's offense, but pass-catchers such as Tracy, Sheffield and Durham will need to step up in order for Purdue to move the chains as effectively as it did last season. In a balanced Big Ten West, Purdue has enough talent, depth and experience to contend for a division title again this season.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)				
WR	**0**	**Milton Wright (Sr.)**	8	TJ Sheffield (Jr.)
WR	3	Tyrone Tracy (Jr.)	18	Deion Burks (So.)
WR	29	Broc Thompson (Sr.)	9	Mershawn Rice (Jr.)
LT	**74**	**Eric Miller (Sr.)**	64	Mahamane Moussa (So.)
LG	**75**	**Spencer Holstege (Jr.)**	54	Josh Kaltenberger (So.)
C	**53**	**Gus Hartwig (Jr.)**	75	Spencer Holstege (Jr.)
RG	63	Marcus Mbow (So.)	72	Sione Finau (Jr.)
RT	68	Cam Craig (Jr.)		Daniel Johnson (Sr.)
TE	**87**	**Payne Durham (Sr.)**	88	Garrett Miller (Jr.)
QB	**16**	**Aidan O'Connell (Sr.)**	12	Austin Burton (Sr.)
RB	22	King Doerue (Sr.)	24	Sampson James (Sr.)
DEFENSE (9)			Returning Starters in **BOLD**	
DE	99	Jack Sullivan (Sr.)	95	Joe Anderson (Jr.)
DT	**58**	**Branson Deen (Sr.)**	34	Damarjhe Lewis (So.)
DT	**90**	**Lawrence Johnson (Sr.)**	77	DJ Washington (Sr.)
DE	**44**	**Kydran Jenkins (So.)**	46	Scotty Humpich (Sr.)
ILB	97	Semisi Fakasiieiki (Sr.)	**43**	**Kieren Douglas (Sr.)**
ILB	20	OC Brothers (Jr.)	42	Clyde Washington (Jr.)
CB	**23**	**Cory Trice (Sr.)**	11	Tee Denson (So.)
CB	1	Reese Taylor (Sr.)	**7**	**Jamari Brown (Sr.)**
S	**6**	**Jalen Graham (Sr.)**	17	Chris Jefferson (Sr.)
SS	17	Chris Jefferson (Sr.)	21	Sanoussi Kane (Jr.)
FS	**10**	**Cam Allen (Sr.)**	35	Antonio Stevens (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	24	Mitchell Fineran (Sr.)	**KR**	8	TJ Sheffield (Jr.)
P	30	Jack Ansell (So.)	**PR**	8	TJ Sheffield (Jr.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Aidan O'Connell	**439**	**315**	**3,712**	**28**	**11**
Jack Plummer	127	87	864	7	0
Austin Burton	**7**	**5**	**44**	**0**	**0**
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
King Doerue	**135**	**533**	**3.9**	**2**	
Zander Horvath	91	320	3.5	3	
Dylan Downing	**44**	**178**	**4.0**	**1**	
Jackson Anthrop	23	83	3.6	0	
David Bell	3	39	13.0	0	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
David Bell	93	1,286	13.8	6	
Milton Wright	**57**	**732**	**12.8**	**7**	
Jackson Anthrop	53	570	10.8	5	
Payne Durham	**45**	**467**	**10.4**	**6**	
TJ Sheffield	**36**	**325**	**9.0**	**5**	

KICKING: **Mitchell Fineran, 24-29 FGs, 112 pts.**
TACKLES: Jaylan Alexander, 114; **Marvin Grant, 74**
SACKS: **Kydran Jenkins, 5.0;** George Karlaftis, 5.0
INTERCEPTIONS: **Cam Allen, 4**

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE BOILERMAKERS

Opposing Coaches Size Up Purdue

"You could see in their bowl game, they're getting back to that offensive energy they had early when Jeff Brohm got there. Most of that offense is coming back, and they're clicking. They're losing David Bell, but that's a position group they're good at developing. They're solid at wide receiver without having that next guy just yet, and they've got good tight ends. I think their entire line is back, and when they're comfortable passing the ball in his offense, look out — they can kill you. We're not sure what the upside of the quarterback [Aidan O'Connell] is. Can he take another step? … Defensively, losing a guy like George [Karlaftis] is just insane. Even one guy. Everyone was accounting for him, sliding lines over and matching everything they could to stop him. I'm not sure they have another guy like that. … It hinges on how the front seven holds up. Can they stop the run? That's life in that division. They've done a pretty good job recruiting those positions, and they've got a few transfers. So if they can push the run-heavy teams into passing, that offense will complement perfectly. … They have really good corners, especially the one [Cory Trice] coming off the ACL. You just have to stop the run more effectively. … If they can knock off Penn State in the first game, they might catch fire early and make some noise in the West."

WISCONSIN BADGERS

National Forecast: 19 • Big Ten West Prediction: 1 • Projected Record: 9-4, 6-3 Big Ten

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Paul Chryst
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 65-23 (7 years)
CAREER RECORD: 84-42 (10 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Bobby Engram
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jim Leonhard
LOCATION: Madison, WI
STADIUM: Camp Randall Stadium (80,321)

KEY BADGERS

BRAELON ALLEN, RB Allen rushed for 100 or more yards in seven straight games, all wins, to ignite the Badgers' offense after a 1–3 start. Allen finished with 1,268 rushing yards and 12 touchdowns.

KEEANU BENTON, NT Played a career-high 472 snaps last season and became an effective pass rusher as an end in nickel sets while maintaining his run-stopping prowess. Could have entered the NFL Draft but chose to return for his senior season.

GRAHAM MERTZ, QB Played all 13 games; this will be his third season as the starting quarterback after he threw for 1,958 yards as a redshirt sophomore.

KEY LOSSES

LEO CHENAL, LB Second-team All-American was the biggest disruptor on UW's top-ranked defense, accounting for 115 tackles, 18.5 for a loss and eight sacks in 11 games.

JACK SANBORN, LB Sanborn called the defense for the Badgers the past two seasons and was a sure tackler, racking up 91 stops and 16 tackles for a loss.

JAKE FERGUSON, TE Caught a pass in each of his 47 career games played and finished his career with the third-most receiving yards by a tight end (1,618) in program history, including 450 last season.

RISING STAR

After showing glimpses of his big-play ability as a true freshman, wide receiver **MARKUS ALLEN** steps into a top-line role in a UW offense that lost its top three pass-catchers. His size, leaping ability and run-after-the-catch skills should give the Badgers a threat they've been missing in recent seasons.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Joe Brunner, OT, Milwaukee, WI	★★★★
2	Isaac Hamm, DL, Sun Prairie, WI	★★★★
3	Austin Brown, S, Johnston City, IL	★★★
4	Curt Neal, DL, Cornelius, NC	★★★
5	Barrett Nelson, OT, Stoughton, WI	★★★
6	Aidan Vaughan, LB, Walled Lake, MI	★★★
7	A'Khoury Lyde, CB, Wayne, NJ	★★★
8	Vinny Anthony, WR, Louisville, KY	★★★
9	Myles Burkett, QB, Franklin, WI	★★★
10	Tristan Monday, LB, Scottsdale, AZ	★★★
11	Tommy McIntosh, WR, DeWitt, MI	★★★
12	Avyonne Jones, CB, Southlake, TX	★★★
13	Cade Yacamelli, ATH, Harrison City, PA	★★★
14	JT Seagreaves, TE, Monroe, WI	★★★
15	Chris Brooks Jr., WR, St. Louis, MO	★★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite

Wisconsin is looking to get back on track after two subpar seasons under eighth-year coach Paul Chryst.

The Badgers haven't played in the Big Ten Championship Game since 2019, but they have the three best recruiting classes in program history moving into starting roles on both sides of the ball. The talent on the offensive side will be operating in an updated scheme under the direction of four new assistant coaches. After the defense carried the team to a 9–4 record and the sixth bowl win under Chryst, the Badgers are trusting a new set of playmakers on offense to create more points after dipping below 26 per game for the second straight season.

Turnover both on the field and on the sideline could help the Badgers find a spark in areas where they've lacked one.

OFFENSE Wisconsin found its latest star running back last season in Braelon Allen, whose physical and aggressive running style became the foundation of the team's offensive identity. Allen led the FBS in yards when facing an eight-man box (814) and yards after contact per attempt (4.5), according to PFF, and he will be the focal point of the offense as an 18-year-old sophomore under new coordinator Bobby Engram.

"Our key philosophies will be the same, but we want to present different pictures of them," Chryst says.

With Allen leading the way, the Badgers are hoping to field a three-back attack along with seniors Chez Mellusi and Isaac Guerendo akin to when Montee Ball, Melvin Gordon III and James White shared carries.

Veteran coach Bob Bostad has taken over the Badgers' offensive line after serving as the program's linebackers coach since 2017. Redshirt sophomore Jack Nelson, playing left tackle after starting last season at right guard, has the athleticism and aggressiveness needed to make an impact on the edge.

Quarterback Graham Mertz is back for a third season needing to cut down on turnovers after throwing 11 picks and losing four fumbles. Mertz will be operating more often under center with Engram calling plays, but the Badgers need to create more splash plays through the air after ranking ninth in the Big Ten in yards per attempt (6.9) last season.

Junior receiver Chimere Dike is in line for a bounce-back year after just 33 targets in 2021. He's the most experienced receiver on the roster and has the best chemistry with Mertz.

DEFENSE Jim Leonhard is one of the premier defensive coordinators in college football, but he has the challenge of replacing eight starters from the top-ranked rushing and total yardage defense in the FBS.

Trying to replace linebackers Leo Chenal, a second-team All-American, and Jack Sanborn, a unanimous first-team All-Big Ten pick, will be a crop of inexperienced but talented players. Redshirt sophomore Jordan Turner figures to contribute, as does junior Maema Njongmeta, a powerful tackler who's quick off the ball. UW has used its inside linebackers as disruptive pass

BRAELON ALLEN

Joe Robbins

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Illinois State
Sept. 10	Washington State
Sept. 17	New Mexico State
Sept. 24	at Ohio State
Oct. 1	Illinois
Oct. 8	at Northwestern
Oct. 15	at Michigan State
Oct. 22	Purdue
Nov. 5	Maryland
Nov. 12	at Iowa
Nov. 19	at Nebraska
Nov. 26	Minnesota

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 9-4, 6-3 BIG TEN

Sept. 4	Penn State	L	10-16
Sept. 11	Eastern Michigan	W	34-7
Sept. 25	vs. Notre Dame #	L	13-41
Oct. 2	Michigan	L	17-38
Oct. 9	at Illinois	W	24-0
Oct. 16	Army	W	20-14
Oct. 23	at Purdue	W	30-13
Oct. 30	Iowa	W	27-7
Nov. 6	at Rutgers	W	52-3
Nov. 13	Northwestern	W	35-7
Nov. 20	Nebraska	W	35-28
Nov. 27	at Minnesota	L	13-23
Dec. 30	vs. Arizona State %	W	20-13

#Chicago %Las Vegas Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	B1G	NATIONAL
Scoring	25.4 ppg	8	85
Rushing	210.9 ypg	2	21
Passing	160.2 ypg	13	120
Total	371.1 ypg	8	89

DEFENSE	PER GAME	B1G	NATIONAL
Scoring	16.2 ppg	1	4
Rushing	64.8 ypg	1	1
Passing	174.3 ypg	1	4
Total	239.1 ypg	1	1

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	B1G	NATIONAL
+1	+0.08	9	64

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	31.1	19
Defense	28.4	51
Margin	+2.7	26
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	44.1%	55
Defense	33.1%	2
Margin	+11.0%	4
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	5.6	82
Defense	4.2	2
Margin	+1.4	12
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	3.6	111
Defense	3.1	7
Margin	+0.5	45
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	-1.0	85
Actual	1	57
Margin	+2.0	47

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

3.12

Wisconsin's rushing defense held opponents to 3.12 yards per rush, lowest in the nation. Opponents were successful only 31.9 percent of the time when rushing the ball against Wisconsin.

34.7%

Wisconsin held opponents to a 34.7 percent success rate on third downs, 10th in the nation. Opponents faced an average distance of 7.5 yards to go on third downs, 29th nationally.

3.81

Wisconsin had quality possessions at a rate of 51.4 percent (44th in FBS) but averaged 3.81 points per quality possession, 116th in the nation.

rushers under Leonhard, a trend that will continue regardless of who's occupying those roles.

Outside linebacker Nick Herbig had a breakout season with nine sacks and a forced fumble. UW believes he can be the kind of force off the edge that requires an offense's attention every play. The Badgers may use a rotation opposite of Herbig. Redshirt freshman Darryl Peterson's raw power stood out during training camp and in the Las Vegas Bowl last season, while senior C.J. Goetz has shown improved pass-rushing ability.

The Badgers have asked their defensive line to become more disruptive this year, and the group's depth should allow it to do so. Senior nose tackle Keeanu Benton is the player to watch in this unit — he decided against going to the NFL and is looking to have another strong year to improve his stock.

Three transfer cornerbacks were added to the secondary to help a group losing three-year starter Caesar Williams and four-year starter Faion Hicks. Those transfers — Justin Clark, Cedrick Dort Jr. and Jay Shaw — have plenty of experience at the college level.

Watch for a breakout season from safety Hunter Wohler. The former four-star recruit is in line to start and has the ball skills and athleticism to be a game-changer on the back end.

SPECIALISTS A new kicker must emerge after the departure of Collin Larsh, but the Badgers added junior transfer Vito Calvaruso to compete for the placekicking duties while shoring up the kickoff role. Calvaruso tallied touchbacks on 85.1 percent of his kickoffs for Arkansas in 2021. Andy Vujnovich returns as punter after registering a program-record 46.4 yards per punt.

Finding an explosive returner would be a big boost for a team that has struggled to replace Aron Cruickshank since his transfer following the 2019 season. Stephan Bracey Jr., Markus Allen or Skyler Bell could fit the bill.

FINAL ANALYSIS This is a make-or-break season for Mertz, and it marks a turning point for the program as well. A strong season in the new offense could mean one more year of an improved Mertz, while another year of struggles would likely mean finding a new signal-caller.

The defense might not be as good from the first snap as it was last year, but it should get up to speed quickly and be able to keep UW in every game.

UW hasn't won a Big Ten title since 2012, but this year's team has the talent to find itself competing for one if the QB plays to his potential.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)				
WR	13	Chimere Dike (Jr.)	11	Skyler Bell (Fr.)
WR	4	Markus Allen (Fr.)	3	Keontez Lewis (So.)
LT	**79**	**Jack Nelson (So.)**	71	Riley Mahlman (Fr.)
LG	**65**	**Tyler Beach (Sr.)**	74	Michael Furtney (Sr.)
C	**75**	**Joe Tippmann (Jr.)**	62	Cormac Sampson (Sr.)
RG	63	Tanor Bortolini (So.)	78	Trey Wedig (So.)
RT	50	Logan Brown (Jr.)	66	Nolan Rucci (Fr.)
TE	82	Jack Eschenbach (Sr.)	85	Clay Cundiff (Jr.)
QB	**5**	**Graham Mertz (Jr.)**	2	Chase Wolf (Sr.)
FB	34	Jackson Acker (Fr.)	37	Riley Nowakowski (So.)
RB	**0**	**Braelon Allen (So.)**	6	Chez Mellusi (Sr.)
DEFENSE (3)			Returning Starters in **BOLD**	
DE	**99**	**Isaiah Mullens (Sr.)**	56	Rodas Johnson (Jr.)
NT	**95**	**Keeanu Benton (Sr.)**	90	James Thompson Jr. (So.)
OLB	**19**	**Nick Herbig (Jr.)**	52	Kaden Johnson (So.)
ILB	39	Tatum Grass (Jr.)	54	Jordan Turner (So.)
ILB	55	Maema Njongmeta (Jr.)	7	Spencer Lytle (Jr.)
OLB	98	C.J. Goetz (Sr.)	17	Darryl Peterson (Fr.)
CB	1	Jay Shaw (Sr.)	2	Ricardo Hallman (Fr.)
CB	11	Alexander Smith (Sr.)	12	Max Lofy (So.)
CB	21	Justin Clark (Sr.)	5	Cedrick Dort Jr. (Sr.)
SS	15	John Torchio (Sr.)	48	Owen Arnett (Fr.)
FS	24	Hunter Wohler (So.)	26	Travian Blaylock (Sr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	91	Vito Calvaruso (Jr.)	**KR**	10	Stephan Bracey Jr. (Jr.)
P	38	Andy Vujnovich (Sr.)	**PR**	6	Dean Engram (Jr.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	**ATT**	**COMP**	**YDS**	**TD**	**INT**
Graham Mertz	**284**	**169**	**1,958**	**10**	**11**
Chase Wolf	**16**	**8**	**124**	**1**	**2**
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Braelon Allen	**186**	**1,268**	**6.8**	**12**	
Chez Mellusi	**173**	**815**	**4.7**	**5**	
Isaac Guerendo	**23**	**160**	**7.0**	**1**	
Brady Schipper	**28**	**128**	**4.6**	**0**	
Julius Davis	**21**	**109**	**5.2**	**0**	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Jake Ferguson	46	450	9.8	3	
Danny Davis III	32	478	14.9	2	
Kendric Pryor	32	416	13.0	3	
Chimere Dike	**19**	**272**	**14.3**	**1**	
Braelon Allen	**8**	**39**	**4.9**	**0**	

KICKING: Collin Larsh, 17-22 FGs, 90 pts.
TACKLES: Leo Chenal, 115; Jack Sanborn, 91
SACKS: **Nick Herbig, 9.0**
INTERCEPTIONS: 3 players tied with 3

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE BADGERS

Opposing Coaches Size Up Wisconsin

"Last year they were exceptionally good on defense. Jim Leonhard does a really great job. They do lots of things with coverages; they attack people. A lot of us thought last year, Leo Chenal was the best defensive player in the league. He's gonna be a great NFL player one day. Jack Sanborn is a really, really good inside backer; he's a pure football player and another next-level guy. They're losing some huge pieces, but Leonhard really makes this the strength of the program right now. … Offensively, they're Wisconsin, full stop. They're big and they're physical up front, to the point where you feel like they invented it. The back is a typical bruiser for them, a 240-pound cannon-ball guy that looks like a beast who's been in a college weight room for four years, but he's young. … The new OC [Bobby Engram] needs to work on QB consistency and find some targets. Unless they hit on some transfers, I don't really know if they have a go-to option at WR or TE right now. … It's UW, so you're running the ball, but they struggle when that's all you can do and teams can cheat you. And, yeah, they have this one very specific offensive identity, but you can't get stale. Their red-zone execution really suffered last year because they were easy to predict. They need new ideas, they need some playmaker receivers, they need to make you respect the whole field."

C-USA PREVIEW

PREDICTED ORDER OF FINISH

1	UAB **BLAZERS**	9-4, 6-2
2	UTSA **ROADRUNNERS**	7-6, 6-2
3	WKU **HILLTOPPERS**	7-6, 5-3
4	UTEP **MINERS**	6-6, 5-3
5	FLORIDA ATLANTIC **OWLS**	6-6, 4-4
6	NORTH TEXAS **MEAN GREEN**	6-6, 4-4
7	CHARLOTTE **49ers**	5-7, 4-4
8	MIDDLE TENNESSEE **BLUE RAIDERS**	4-8, 3-5
9	LOUISIANA TECH **BULLDOGS**	4-8, 3-5
10	RICE **OWLS**	4-8, 3-5
11	FIU **PANTHERS**	4-8, 1-7

Games to Watch

Houston at UTSA, Sept. 3
UAB at Liberty, Sept. 10
UTSA at Texas, Sept. 17
WKU at Indiana, Sept. 17
UCF at Florida Atlantic, Sept. 17
WKU at UTSA, Oct. 8
UAB at WKU, Oct. 21
Florida Atlantic at UTEP, Oct. 22
UAB at Florida Atlantic, Oct. 29
UTSA at UAB, Nov. 5
UTEP at UTSA, Nov. 26
WKU at Florida Atlantic, Nov. 26

DEWAYNE MCBRIDE

UAB Athletics

Conference USA Championship:
UAB over UTSA

Recruiting by School

1. UTSA
2. UAB
3. Louisiana Tech
4. WKU
5. FIU
6. Charlotte
7. North Texas
8. Rice
9. Middle Tennessee
10. Florida Atlantic
11. UTEP

ALL-C-USA TEAM

FIRST-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	**Frank Harris**	Sr.	UTSA
RB	**DeWayne McBride**	Jr.	UAB
RB	**Ronald Awatt**	Sr.	UTEP
AP	**Jermaine Brown Jr.**	Sr.	UAB
WR	**Zakhari Franklin**	Sr.	UTSA
WR	**Tyrese Chambers**	Jr.	FIU
TE	**Rivaldo Fairweather**	So.	FIU
C	**Ahofitu Maka**	Sr.	UTSA
OL	**Quantavious Leslie**	So.	WKU
OL	**Manase Mose**	Sr.	North Texas
OL	**Sidney Wells**	Sr.	UAB
OL	**Matthew Trehern**	Sr.	UAB

FIRST-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	**Jordan Ferguson**	Sr.	Middle Tennessee
DL	**Praise Amaewhule**	Jr.	UTEP
DL	**Keenan Stewart**	Jr.	UTEP
DL	**Evan Anderson**	So.	Florida Atlantic
DL	**Davon Strickland**	Jr.	FIU
LB	**Tyler Grubbs**	So.	Louisiana Tech
LB	**KD Davis**	Sr.	North Texas
LB	**Noah Wilder**	Sr.	UAB
CB	**Corey Mayfield Jr.**	Sr.	UTSA
CB	**Starling Thomas V**	Sr.	UAB
S	**Rashad Wisdom**	Sr.	UTSA
S	**Teja Young**	Jr.	Florida Atlantic

FIRST-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	**Brayden Narveson**	Jr.	WKU
KR	**Shadrick Byrd**	So.	Charlotte
P	**Lucas Dean**	Sr.	UTSA
PR	**Jaylin Lane**	So.	Middle Tennessee

SECOND-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	**Chris Reynolds**	Sr.	Charlotte
RB	**Shadrick Byrd**	So.	Charlotte
RB	**Ari Broussard**	Jr.	Rice
AP	**Smoke Harris**	Jr.	Louisiana Tech
WR	**Victor Tucker**	Sr.	Charlotte
WR	**Grant DuBose**	Jr.	Charlotte
TE	**Oscar Cardenas**	Jr.	UTSA
C	**Nick Weber**	Sr.	Florida Atlantic
OL	**Elijah Klein**	Jr.	UTEP
OL	**Joshua Mote**	Sr.	Louisiana Tech
OL	**Makai Hart**	Sr.	UTSA
OL	**Rusty Staats**	Jr.	WKU

SECOND-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	**Markees Watts**	Sr.	Charlotte
DL	**Ikenna Enechukwu**	Jr.	Rice
DL	**Deshon Hall**	Jr.	Louisiana Tech
DL	**Darius Shipp**	Sr.	WKU
DL	**De'Braylon Carroll**	So.	Rice
LB	**Breon Hayward**	Sr.	UTEP
LB	**Tyrice Knight**	Sr.	UTEP
LB	**Trevor Harmanson**	Sr.	UTSA
CB	**DeShawn Gaddie**	Jr.	North Texas
CB	**Kahlef Hailassie**	Jr.	WKU
S	**Grayson Cash**	Sr.	UAB
S	**BeeJay Williamson**	Jr.	Louisiana Tech

SECOND-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	**Jacob Barnes**	So.	Louisiana Tech
KR	**Jaylin Lane**	So.	Middle Tennessee
P	**Joshua Sloan**	So.	UTEP
PR	**Smoke Harris**	Jr.	Louisiana Tech

THIRD-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	**Dylan Hopkins**	Sr.	UAB
RB	**Ikaika Ragsdale**	So.	North Texas
RB	**Lexington Joseph**	Jr.	FIU
AP	**Joshua Cephus**	Sr.	UTSA
WR	**Daewood Davis**	Sr.	WKU
WR	**Trea Shropshire**	Sr.	UAB
TE	**Joshua Simon**	So.	WKU
C	**Jordan Palmer**	Sr.	Middle Tennessee
OL	**Shea Baker**	Sr.	Rice
OL	**Kadeem Telfort**	Sr.	UAB
OL	**Ashton Gist**	Sr.	Charlotte
OL	**Lyndell Hudson Jr.**	Jr.	FIU

THIRD-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	**Fish McWilliams Jr.**	Sr.	UAB
DL	**Roderick Brown**	So.	North Texas
DL	**Juwuan Jones**	Sr.	WKU
DL	**Brandon Brown**	So.	UTSA
DL	**Jamal Ligon**	Jr.	UTSA
LB	**Kelle Sanders**	Sr.	UAB
LB	**Will Ignont**	Sr.	WKU
LB	**Jaden Hunter**	Sr.	WKU
CB	**Mac McWilliams**	So.	UAB
CB	**Teldrick Ross**	Jr.	Middle Tennessee
S	**A.J. Brathwaite Jr.**	Jr.	WKU
S	**Keondre Swoopes Jr.**	Sr.	UAB

THIRD-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	**Gavin Baechle**	Sr.	UTEP
KR	**Walter Dawn Jr.**	Sr.	UTEP
P	**Kyle Greenwell**	Sr.	UAB
PR	**LaJohntay Wester**	So.	Florida Atlantic

2022 BOWL PROJECTIONS

Bahamas Bowl
Florida Atlantic vs. Western Michigan

Cure Bowl
WKU vs. Liberty

Frisco Bowl
North Texas vs. Colorado State

Frisco Football Classic
UTEP vs. Louisiana

New Mexico Bowl
UTSA vs. Utah State

New Orleans Bowl
UAB vs. Appalachian State

2021 STANDINGS

East	**C-USA**	**Overall**
WKU	7-1	9-5
Marshall	5-3	7-6
Old Dominion	5-3	6-7
Middle Tennessee	4-4	7-6
Florida Atlantic	3-5	5-7
Charlotte	3-5	5-7
FIU	0-8	1-11

West	**C-USA**	**Overall**
UTSA	7-1	12-2
UAB	6-2	9-4
North Texas	5-3	6-7
UTEP	4-4	7-6
Rice	3-5	4-8
Southern Miss	2-6	3-9
Louisiana Tech	2-6	3-9

2021 BOWL RESULTS

Bahamas Bowl
Middle Tennessee 31, Toledo 24

Boca Raton Bowl
WKU 59, Appalachian State 38

New Mexico Bowl
Fresno State 31, UTEP 24

Independence Bowl
UAB 31, BYU 28

New Orleans Bowl
Louisiana 36, Marshall 21

Myrtle Beach Bowl
Tulsa 30, Old Dominion 17

Frisco Bowl
San Diego State 38, UTSA 24

Frisco Football Classic
Miami (Ohio) 27, North Texas 14

CHARLOTTE 49ERS

National Forecast: 108 • C-USA Prediction: 7 • Projected Record: 5-7, 4-4 C-USA

2022 SCHEDULE

Aug. 27	at Florida Atlantic
Sept. 2	William & Mary
Sept. 10	Maryland
Sept. 17	at Georgia State
Sept. 24	at South Carolina
Oct. 1	UTEP
Oct. 15	at UAB
Oct. 22	FIU
Oct. 29	at Rice
Nov. 5	WKU
Nov. 12	at Middle Tennessee
Nov. 19	Louisiana Tech

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 5-7, 3-5 C-USA

Sept. 3	Duke	W	31-28
Sept. 11	Gardner-Webb	W	38-10
Sept. 18	at Georgia State	L	9-20
Sept. 24	Middle Tennessee	W	42-39
Oct. 2	at Illinois	L	14-24
Oct. 8	at FIU	W	45-33
Oct. 21	Florida Atlantic	L	9-38
Oct. 30	at WKU	L	13-45
Nov. 6	Rice (ot)	W	31-24
Nov. 13	at Louisiana Tech	L	32-42
Nov. 20	Marshall	L	28-49
Nov. 27	at Old Dominion	L	34-56

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	CUSA	NATIONAL
Scoring	27.2 ppg	9	79
Rushing	149.6 ypg	8	76
Passing	253.7 ypg	6	48
Total	403.2 ypg	5	65

DEFENSE	PER GAME	CUSA	NATIONAL
Scoring	34.0 ppg	11	114
Rushing	204.2 ypg	13	115
Passing	260.8 ypg	10	108
Total	465.0 ypg	13	120

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	CUSA	NATIONAL
-5	-0.42	9	98

STAT CORNER

0.411

Charlotte's defense ranked 129th in passing efficiency allowed, averaging 0.411 EPA/pass. The 49ers fell victim to the big play, allowing 73 plays of 20-plus yards, the second-highest number in the nation.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Chris Reynolds, 337-215-2,684-9, 26 TDs
Rushing: Calvin Camp, 113 att., 635 yds., 4 TDs
Receiving: Grant DuBose, 62 rec., 892 yds., 6 TDs
Tackles: Markees Watts, 61
Sacks: Markees Watts, 6.0
Interceptions: Three players tied with 1

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Will Healy
Record at School: 14-17 (3 years)
Career Record: 27-38 (6 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Mark Carney
Defensive Coordinator: Greg Brown
Location: Charlotte, NC
Stadium: Jerry Richardson Stadium (15,314)

OFFENSE The 49ers will return plenty from an offensive unit that averaged 29.3 points in league games last season. The attack will once again be in the hands of quarterback Chris Reynolds, a fifth-year senior starter, three-time team captain and the school's all-time passing leader with 7,726 yards and 62 touchdowns. Reynolds' experience and leadership ability make him a luxury, but with his run-heavy playing style, having backups such as James Foster and Xavier Williams ready to step in is crucial.

Reynolds will have plenty of proven weapons. Redshirt senior Victor Tucker, second on the program's all-time receptions list, will again be a prime target along with 6'3" Grant DuBose, last season's leading receiver. Head coach Will Healy expects sophomore receivers Elijah Spencer and Jairus Mack as well as Wake Forest transfer Nolan Groulx and tight ends Taylor Thompson and Jake Clemons to see their share of targets, too.

Last season's trio of workhorse backs — Calvin Camp, Shadrick Byrd and ChaVon McEachern — will benefit from a deep and experienced offensive line led by two redshirt seniors — tackle TJ Moore and Ashton Gist, who will move to center.

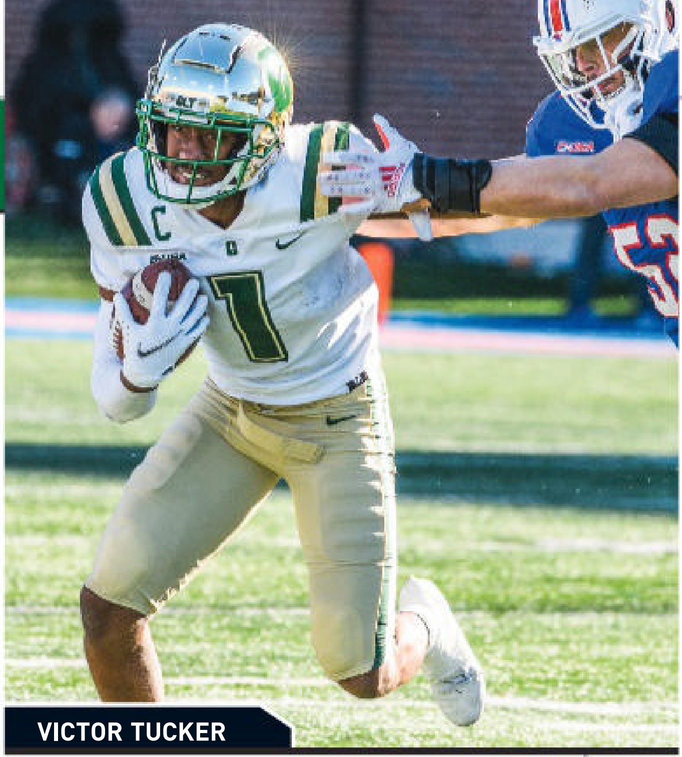
DEFENSE On a staff with several new faces, the most notable addition is new defensive coordinator Greg Brown, who has spent most of the past four decades on NFL and Power 5 staffs. Healy says the formations likely won't look too different, but the coverage schemes will be overhauled.

The 49ers will have veterans up front in defensive tackles Isaac Hampton, Jalar Holley and Bryan Wallace and defensive ends Kofi Wardlow, Amir Siddiq and Markees Watts, who led the team with six sacks a season ago. At linebacker, Derek Boykins and Prince Bemah will need to replace the production of last season's top tacklers Tyler Martin and Luke Martin, who both graduated.

The secondary features talented pieces such as cornerbacks Trey Creamer and Geo Howard and safety Solomon Rogers, but the 49ers will need much more consistency from the group.

SPECIALISTS Placekicker Jonathan Cruz set school records for accuracy and distance, but he transferred to Ole Miss, leaving the job in the hands of freshman Braeden McAlister. Punter Bailey Rice returns after making the C-USA All-Freshman team. Byrd should reprise his role as the main kick returner, while Tucker will once again handle most punt returns.

FINAL ANALYSIS After back-to-back losing seasons, and with a move to the American Athletic Conference on the horizon in 2023, Healy felt it was time to switch a few things up, adding several new assistant coaches and overhauling the defensive approach. Healy feels the 49ers have the necessary raw ingredients; they just need to find the right recipe. "From a leadership perspective, a culture perspective and the perspective of adding the type of talent you want to have, we're getting there," Healy says. "We're trending in the right direction."



VICTOR TUCKER

Charlotte Athletics

> "Great coaching staff, great culture; they just need more players. They're probably feeling the pressure right now to show that 2019 wasn't just a one-off."
>
> —An opposing C-USA assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Aveon Grose, S, Mansfield, OH	★★★
2	Jake McTaggart, TE, Hayesville, NC	★★★
3	Cade Goldman, OT, Harrisburg, NC	★★★
4	Micah Bell, RB, McDonough, GA	★★★
5	Maguire Neal, Zephyrhills, FL	★★★
6	Roger Walters, ATH, Port Saint Lucie, FL	★★★
7	Reid Williford, LB, Nashville, TN	★★★
8	Boston Brinkley, OL, Fort Mill, SC	★★★
9	Antonio Gaines, DL, Columbia, SC	★★★
10	Kendall Stanley, OT, Charlotte, NC	★★★

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)

WR	1	**Victor Tucker (Sr.)**	9	Elijah Spencer (So.)
WR	14	**Grant DuBose (Jr.)**	80	Jairus Mack (So.)
LT	58	Jon Jacobs (Sr.)	71	Arabee Muslim (So.)
LG	53	**Panda Askew (So.)**	74	Knox Boyd (Fr.)
C	57	**Ashton Gist (Sr.)**	52	Jonny King (So.)
RG	76	Jordan Brown (Fr.)	51	B.J. Ragland (Fr.)
RT	75	**TJ Moore (Sr.)**	77	**Jaxon Hughes (Jr.)**
TE	11	Taylor Thompson (So.)	81	Jake Clemons (So.)
QB	3	**Chris Reynolds (Sr.)**	7	James Foster (Jr.)
RB	13	**Shadrick Byrd (So.)**	25	ChaVon McEachern (So.)
RB	5	Calvin Camp (Sr.)	27	Johnny Martin (Fr.)

DEFENSE (6)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	0	**Markees Watts (Sr.)**	53	Mike Kelly (Jr.)
DT	96	Isaac Hampton (Sr)	90	Dez Morgan (So.)
DT	97	**Jalar Holley (So.)**	60	Bryan Wallace (Sr.)
DE	7	**Kofi Wardlow (Sr.)**	1	Amir Siddiq (Sr.)
LB	30	Derek Boykins (Jr.)	8	Cam Burden (Fr.)
LB	59	B.J. Turner (Sr.)	21	Shyhiem Scotland (Fr.)
LB	25	Prince Bemah (Jr.)	33	Jaylon Sharpe (Jr.)
CB	4	**Geo Howard (Sr.)**	20	Doug Newsome (So.)
CB	3	**Trey Creamer (Sr.)**	12	Shedrick Ursery (So.)
S	6	**Solomon Rogers (Sr.)**	14	Steven Parker (Fr.)
S	10	Davondre Robinson (Sr.)	22	Marcus Robitaille (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K		Braeden McAlister (Fr.)	KR	13	Shadrick Byrd (So.)
P	37	Bailey Rice (So.)	PR	1	Victor Tucker (Sr.)

FLORIDA ATLANTIC OWLS

National Forecast: 105 • C-USA Prediction: 5 • Projected Record: 6-6, 4-4 C-USA

2022 SCHEDULE

Aug. 27	Charlotte
Sept. 3	at Ohio
Sept. 10	SE Louisiana
Sept. 17	UCF
Sept. 24	at Purdue
Oct. 1	at North Texas
Oct. 15	Rice
Oct. 22	at UTEP
Oct. 29	UAB
Nov. 12	at FIU
Nov. 19	at Middle Tennessee
Nov. 26	WKU

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 5-7, 3-5 C-USA

Sept. 4	at Florida	L	14-35
Sept. 11	Georgia Southern	W	38-6
Sept. 18	Fordham	W	45-14
Sept. 25	at Air Force	L	7-31
Oct. 2	FIU	W	58-21
Oct. 9	at UAB	L	14-31
Oct. 21	at Charlotte	W	38-9
Oct. 30	UTEP	W	28-25
Nov. 6	Marshall	L	13-28
Nov. 13	at Old Dominion	L	16-30
Nov. 20	at WKU	L	17-52
Nov. 27	Middle Tennessee	L	17-27

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	CUSA	NATIONAL
Scoring	25.4 ppg	10	84
Rushing	151.3 ypg	6	73
Passing	248.7 ypg	8	55
Total	400.0 ypg	6	68

DEFENSE	PER GAME	CUSA	NATIONAL
Scoring	25.8 ppg	6	58
Rushing	157.0 ypg	8	74
Passing	252.2 ypg	8	104
Total	409.2 ypg	9	90

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	CUSA	NATIONAL
+4	+0.33	4	39

STAT CORNER

5.04

Florida Atlantic's offense finished drives as well as anyone in college football, averaging 5.04 points per quality possession (17th in the FBS).

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: N'Kosi Perry, 345-210-2,771-7, 20 TDs
Rushing: Johnny Ford, 131 att., 831 yds., 5 TDs
Receiving: LaJohntay Wester, 65 rec., 702 yds., 4 TDs
Tackles: Teja Young, 59
Sacks: Jaylen Joyner, 3.0
Interceptions: Teja Young, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Willie Taggart
Record at School: 10-11 (2 years)
Career Record: 66-73 (12 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Brent Dearmon
Defensive Coordinator: Todd Orlando
Location: Boca Raton, FL
Stadium: FAU Stadium (29,571)

Florida Atlantic Athletics

OFFENSE As in his stint as the Miami Hurricanes' quarterback, N'Kosi Perry showed signs of brilliance tempered by bouts of mediocrity in 2021, his first season at Florida Atlantic. Perry is once again learning a new offense. This time, however, he'll enter a season as the unquestioned starter and with 15 spring practices under his belt.

Head coach Willie Taggart likes new offensive coordinator Brent Dearmon's up-tempo offense. The simplified terminology allows players to grasp the scheme quickly.

The Owls are still searching for both a big-play threat and a consistent possession receiver. If Jahmal Edrine — a big body with excellent speed — can stay healthy, he could provide the big-play threat. Perry often looks to Je'Quan Burton underneath or tight end Austin Evans.

To better protect Perry, the Owls signed Rutgers transfer Brendan Bordner to play left tackle. The remainder of the line is largely unchanged from the group that surrendered 35 sacks last season.

USF transfer Johnny Ford, FAU's workhorse back in 2021, missed all of spring and could miss the season because of academic and disciplinary issues. Running back, however, is among the Owls' deepest positions, with Nebraska transfer Marvin Scott III ready to take the lead.

DEFENSE FAU's base defense most closely resembles a 3-4, but the Owls will employ multiple looks. What FAU lacks in overall size, it hopes to make up for with speed, athleticism and deception. One of the outside linebackers, often Chris Jones or newcomer Morven Joseph, will frequently line up as a defensive end. Nickel Ahman Ross is effectively a linebacker/safety hybrid.

The defense is anchored by tackle Evan Anderson. The 6'3", 356-pounder possesses an impressive combination of speed and strength. The Owls will frequently stunt Anderson with ends Jaylen Joyner and Decarius Hawthorne.

With an aggressive, attacking philosophy, FAU defenders will show plenty of pre-snap movement in an effort to confuse opposing offenses. Cornerbacks Smoke Mungin and Jayden Williams will be in single coverage at times. Mungin, in particular, can make big plays but also is prone to getting beat deep.

SPECIALISTS The Owls will turn to Louisville transfer Logan Lupo to handle punting duties. Redshirt freshman Morgan Suarez takes over as the placekicker. He made both of his attempts last season.

FINAL ANALYSIS Last year, FAU emerged from October needing only one more win to become bowl eligible. That victory never came. Taggart is 10–11 in two seasons as FAU coach, and the fan base is getting restless. The coaching staff again underwent a near-total makeover, including new offensive and defensive coordinators for the third consecutive year.

FAU will again field a team loaded with talent. That alone should afford the Owls an opportunity to contend for a C-USA title in what could be their final year before moving to the American Athletic Conference.

N'KOSI PERRY

> "No one is counting Willie Taggart out because he's had turnarounds in the middle of his runs at USF and WKU, but this is not a good offense right now, and he's had steady turnover with assistants."
>
> —An opposing C-USA assistant coach

TOP 9 RECRUITS

1	Jayshon Platt, WR, Venice, FL	★★★
2	Wyatt Sullivan, ATH, Quincy, FL	★★★
3	Michael Boone, CB, Tampa, FL	★★★
4	Xavier Peters, Edge, West Chester, OH*	★★★
5	A'ceon Cobb, WR, Orlando, FL	★★★
6	Jaylen Wester, LB, Palmetto, FL	★★★
7	Marquish Seabon Jr., RB, Lake Wales, FL	★★★
8	Kareem Wilson, DL, Miami, FL	n/r
9	Dearis Thomas, LB, Naples, FL	n/r

*junior college transfer

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

WR	86	Jahmal Edrine (Fr.)	11	Javion Posey (So.)
WR	**82**	**Je'Quan Burton (Jr.)**	85	Jymetre Hester (So.)
WR	**83**	**LaJohntay Wester (So.)**	16	Tony Johnson (Fr.)
LT	69	Brendan Bordner (Sr.)	72	Doug Johnson Jr. (Jr.)
LG	66	Deshawn Richardson (So.)	79	Kamaar Bell (So.)
C	**63**	**Nick Weber (Sr.)**	61	Andre Lamas (So.)
RG	**75**	**Marquice Robinson (Jr.)**	**79**	**Kamaar Bell (So.)**
RT	**71**	**Chaz Neal (Sr.)**	73	Alex Atcavage (So.)
TE	81	Austin Evans (Sr.)	41	Adam Boselli (Sr.)
QB	**7**	**N'Kosi Perry (Sr.)**	10	Willie Taggart Jr. (Fr.)
RB	24	Marvin Scott III (So.)	3	Larry McCammon III (Jr.)

DEFENSE (5)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	**0**	**Jaylen Joyner (Jr.)**	78	Jake Holaday (Sr.)
DT	**8**	**Evan Anderson (So.)**	96	Latrell Jean (So.)
DE	90	Decarius Hawthorne (So.)	97	Jaden Wheeler (So.)
OLB	**49**	**Chris Jones (So.)**	19	Morven Joseph (So.)
ILB	3	Eddie Williams (Jr.)	14	Jaleel McRae (Fr.)
ILB	29	Jamie Pettway (So.)	**59**	**Antarrius Moultrie (So.)**
OLB	54	Marlon Krakue (So.)	55	Dwight Dassaw (Fr.)
CB	20	Smoke Mungin (Jr.)	39	Jahbari Hill (Fr.)
CB	22	Jayden Williams (Fr.)	27	Glover Cook (So.)
SS	**4**	**Teja Young (Jr.)**	5	Ahman Ross (Sr.)
FS	30	Armani-Eli Adams (Jr.)	34	Carter Odell (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	38	Morgan Suarez (Fr.)	KR	82	Je'Quan Burton (Jr.)
P	43	Logan Lupo (So.)	PR	83	LaJohntay Wester (So.)

FIU PANTHERS

National Forecast: 128 • C-USA Prediction: 11 • Projected Record: 4-8, 1-7 C-USA

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	Bryant
Sept. 9	at Texas State
Sept. 24	at WKU
Oct. 1	at New Mexico State
Oct. 8	UConn
Oct. 14	UTSA
Oct. 22	at Charlotte
Oct. 29	Louisiana Tech
Nov. 5	at North Texas
Nov. 12	Florida Atlantic
Nov. 19	at UTEP
Nov. 26	Middle Tennessee

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 1-11, 0-8 C-USA

Sept. 2	LIU	W	48-10
Sept. 11	Texas State (ot)	L	17-23
Sept. 18	at Texas Tech	L	21-54
Sept. 25	at Central Michigan	L	27-31
Oct. 2	at Florida Atlantic	L	21-58
Oct. 8	Charlotte	L	33-45
Oct. 23	WKU	L	19-34
Oct. 30	at Marshall	L	0-38
Nov. 6	Old Dominion	L	24-47
Nov. 13	at Middle Tennessee	L	10-50
Nov. 20	North Texas	L	7-49
Nov. 27	at Southern Miss	L	17-37

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	CUSA	NATIONAL
Scoring	20.3 ppg	13	114
Rushing	102.1 ypg	13	119
Passing	264.6 ypg	3	30
Total	366.7 ypg	11	94

DEFENSE	PER GAME	CUSA	NATIONAL
Scoring	39.7 ppg	14	126
Rushing	228.5 ypg	14	125
Passing	262.8 ypg	11	111
Total	491.3 ypg	14	128

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	CUSA	NATIONAL
-14	-1.17	14	129

STAT CORNER

0.237

FIU allowed 0.237 EPA/pass and 1.29 EPA per passing success, 120th in the nation. The Panthers allowed 23 passing touchdowns and intercepted only three passes.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Grayson James, 27-18-155-0, 1 TD
Rushing: Lexington Joseph, 57 att., 273 yds., 1 TD
Receiving: Tyrese Chambers, 45 rec., 1,074 yds., 9 TDs
Tackles: Davon Strickland, 53
Sacks: Davon Strickland, 3.0
Interceptions: Gio Richardson, 1

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Mike MacIntyre
Record at School: First Season
Career Record: 46-65 (9 years)
Offensive Coordinator: David Yost
Defensive Coordinator: Jovan Dewitt
Location: Miami, FL
Stadium: Riccardo Silva Stadium (20,000)

OFFENSE There is plenty that is new around the FIU program with new head coach Mike MacIntyre taking over, but the noise surrounding the offense centers around three key pieces who return for the 2022 season: wide receiver Tyrese Chambers, offensive tackle Lyndell Hudson and running back Lexington "Flex" Joseph. Chambers is a talented receiver who led the Panthers in catches (45), yards (1,074) and touchdowns (nine) last season. Hudson is a mammoth offensive lineman and veteran leader for FIU. Meanwhile, Joseph gives the Panthers a running back and return man with experience.

There have been plenty of transfers — both exiting and incoming — for the Panthers, but one key addition is quarterback Gunnar Holmberg, who threw for 2,358 yards with seven touchdowns and eight interceptions at Duke last season. Other notable transfers for FIU on the offensive side of the ball include wide receivers Jacolby Hewitt (Indiana) and Sharod Johnson (Syracuse).

In addition to Hudson, the team returns Julius Pierce up front and added a couple other pieces in transfers Rey Burnett and Deyavie Hammond.

DEFENSE One player who will have a big impact in his return to the FIU defense is Pierce Withers, who is a linebacker/nickel back/safety type player who can fill several needs. Last season, Withers played in only eight games, but he tallied 32 tackles and had a forced fumble and a pass breakup for the Panthers' veteran-laden defense. He will now be the veteran who is called on to fill a bigger leadership role.

While the unit doesn't return many players, there is still lots of experience on the defensive side after the addition of several transfers who should make an immediate impact. Perhaps the most significant comes at the linebacker spot, where talented East Tennessee State linebacker Donovan Manuel joins the Panthers. On the back end of the defense, Central Michigan's Willie Reid joins Withers to give the secondary a couple of bona fide playmakers.

On the line, former Syracuse defensive end Latarie Kinsler joins juco signee Will Prendergast and returnee Davon Strickland. Depth and experience will still be major issues, however, as FIU looks to get its numbers up.

SPECIALISTS The return game could be solid with Joseph returning kicks and Chambers returning punts. Placekicker Chase Gabriel needs to be more consistent. The punting job will come down to Marshall transfer Daton Montiel or Australian newcomer Jordan Doelling.

FINAL ANALYSIS There have been few teams as impacted by the transfer portal as FIU. The Panthers lost several key players and look to replenish through the portal. MacIntyre needs to lean on players such as Chambers and Hudson to lead a group that has little experience together. Expectations need to be tempered in 2022, when building chemistry and stability — not necessarily wins and losses — is the immediate charge in Miami.

LEXINGTON JOSEPH

> "The talk around the league is that the athletic department is a mess. Just being in South Florida isn't enough, and this program is proof."
>
> —An opposing C-USA assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Deyavie Hammond, OL, Lakeland, FL*	★★★
2	Mike Jackson, WR, Miami, FL	★★★
3	Semaj Flagg, S, Miami, FL	★★★
4	DJ Aiken, DL, Bluffton, SC	★★★
5	Antonio Patterson, RB, Murfreesboro, TN	★★★
6	John Bock II, OL, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	★★★
7	Jesse Smith, CB, Hollywood, FL*	★★★
8	Amari Jones, QB, Starke, FL	★★★
9	Percy Courtney Jr., S, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	★★★
10	Steven Shannon, DL, Miami, FL	★★★

*junior college transfer

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (2)

WR	1	Jacolby Hewitt (Jr.)	6	Nate Jefferson (So.)
WR	**0**	**Tyrese Chambers (Jr.)**	19	Jalen Bracey (Jr.)
WR	5	Sharod Johnson (Sr.)	16	Randall St. Felix (Sr.)
LT	74	Rey Burnett (Jr.)	67	Jacob Peace (Jr.)
LG	66	Jahmari Sylvester (So.)	73	Sam Hill (Fr.)
C	65	Julius Pierce (So.)	72	Deyavie Hammond (Fr.)
RG	72	Deyavie Hammond (Fr.)	78	Shamar Hobdy-Lee (So.)
RT	**77**	**Lyndell Hudson Jr. (Jr.)**		Naeer Jackson (Fr.)
TE	13	Rivaldo Fairweather (So.)	88	Josiah Miamen (Fr.)
QB	12	Gunnar Holmberg (Sr.)	10	Grayson James (So.)
RB	8	Lexington Joseph (Jr.)	21	EJ Wilson Jr. (So.)

DEFENSE (2)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	1	Latarie Kinsler (Fr.)	89	Ty Danzy (So.)
DT	9	Will Prendergast (So.)	95	Jeremy Moore (Jr.)
DE	**99**	**Davon Strickland (Jr.)**	79	DJ Aiken (Fr.)
OLB	48	Gaethan Bernadel (So.)	50	Malik Adams (So.)
ILB	10	Donovan Manuel (Jr.)	32	Maleek Williams (Sr.)
ILB	3	Shaun Peterson Jr. (Jr.)	55	Baba Conate (Sr.)
CB	6	Adrian Cole (Jr.)	23	Andrew Volmar (So.)
CB	22	Brian Blades (So.)	30	Joe Perkins (So.)
STAR	**15**	**Pierce Withers (Sr.)**	29	Jamal Potts (So.)
S		Willie Reid (Jr.)	19	Deuce Dunbar (So.)
S	27	Henry Gray (So.)	29	Jamal Potts (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	37	Chase Gabriel (So.)	**KR**	8	Lexington Joseph (Jr.)
P	25	Daton Montiel (So.)	**PR**	0	Tyrese Chambers (Jr.)

Bobby Mcduffie/Cal Sport Media via AP Images

LOUISIANA TECH BULLDOGS

National Forecast: 116 • C-USA Prediction: 9 • Projected Record: 4-8, 3-5 C-USA

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	at Missouri
Sept. 10	Stephen F. Austin
Sept. 17	at Clemson
Sept. 24	at South Alabama
Oct. 8	UTEP
Oct. 15	at North Texas
Oct. 22	Rice
Oct. 29	at FIU
Nov. 5	Middle Tennessee
Nov. 12	at UTSA
Nov. 19	at Charlotte
Nov. 26	UAB

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 3-9, 2-6 C-USA

Sept. 4	at Mississippi State	L	34-35
Sept. 11	SE Louisiana	W	45-42
Sept. 18	SMU	L	37-39
Sept. 25	North Texas	W	24-17
Oct. 2	at NC State	L	27-34
Oct. 16	at UTEP	L	3-19
Oct. 23	UTSA	L	16-45
Oct. 30	at Old Dominion	L	20-23
Nov. 6	at UAB	L	38-52
Nov. 13	Charlotte	W	42-32
Nov. 19	Southern Miss	L	19-35
Nov. 27	at Rice	L	31-35

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	CUSA	NATIONAL
Scoring	28.0 ppg	6	69
Rushing	121.8 ypg	11	106
Passing	262.6 ypg	4	35
Total	384.3 ypg	9	77

DEFENSE	PER GAME	CUSA	NATIONAL
Scoring	34.0 ppg	11	114
Rushing	166.5 ypg	10	87
Passing	267.8 ypg	12	117
Total	434.3 ypg	10	106

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	CUSA	NATIONAL
-1	-0.08	7	74

STAT CORNER

0.552

Louisiana Tech's opponents averaged 0.552 EPA/play on first and second downs in 2021, ranking the Bulldog defense 123rd in early-downs efficiency.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: None
Rushing: Greg Garner, 54 att., 216 yds., 3 TDs
Receiving: Smoke Harris, 71 rec., 756 yds., 6 TDs
Tackles: Tyler Grubbs, 97
Sacks: Deshon Hall, 2.5
Interceptions: BeeJay Williamson, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Sonny Cumbie
Record at School: First Season
Career Record: 2-3 (1 year)
Offensive Coordinators: Jake Brown, Scott Parr
Defensive Coordinator: Scott Power
Location: Ruston, LA
Stadium: Joe Aillet Stadium (28,562)

OFFENSE Historically, Louisiana Tech's most memorable teams have tended to embrace a wide-open, pass-happy lifestyle, and tapping Sonny Cumbie as its new head coach was firmly in keeping with that tradition. Cumbie, a former Mike Leach protégé whose offense once led the nation in pass attempts and yards at Texas Tech, is steeped in the Air Raid philosophy.

First order of business: Identifying a new quarterback. The competition in the spring came down to a couple of fifth-year transfers from Cumbie's previous stops — Matthew Downing (TCU) and Parker McNeil (Texas Tech), who arrived with a head start in the system. Whoever wins the job will be putting the ball in the air early and often with last year's top three targets, Smoke Harris, Tre Harris and Griffin Hebert, back on the receiving end. There's an opening for LSU transfer Devonta Lee or an underclassman to stake out a prominent role as well.

Up front, the line has a couple of solid anchors inside in Joshua Mote and Abraham Delfin, sixth-year seniors with nearly 4,000 combined snaps under their belts at guard and center. The other three spots, though — including left tackle, where starter Biron Rossell was demoted late last season — are up for grabs.

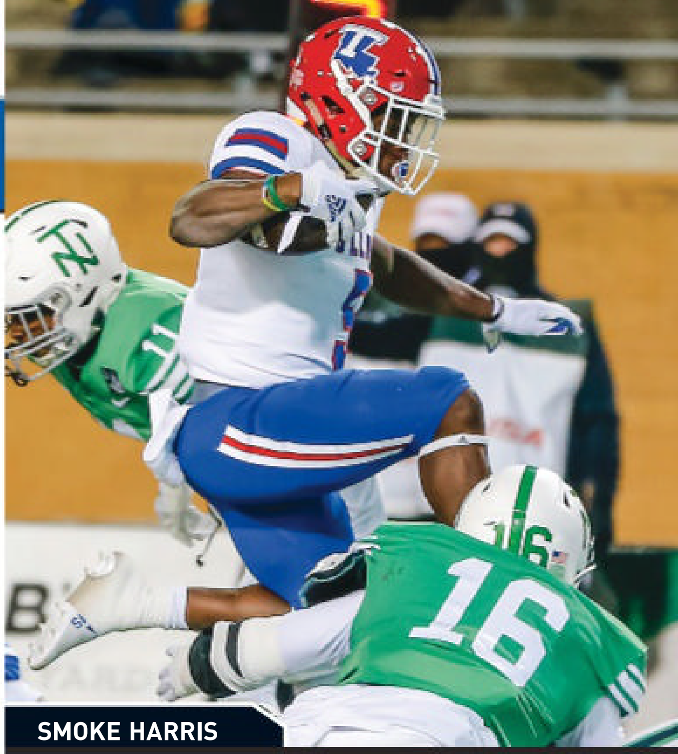
DEFENSE The defense struggled on all fronts in 2021, giving up at least 34 points in nine games. New coordinator Scott Power comes from FCS Stephen F. Austin with carte blanche to remake the unit in his image.

He started at cornerback, bringing along a pair of starters from SFA, Myles Brooks and Willie Roberts, to shore up a position that lost three-fourths of the rotation. At least one and possibly both of them will move directly into the starting lineup, if only out of necessity.

The Bulldogs also added Texas Tech transfer Nelson Mbanasor to a front in desperate need of more pass-rushing juice, and Boston College linebacker Hugh Davis to a position with no notable experience behind Tyler Grubbs (a second-team All-C-USA pick) and Maki Carabin. On the whole, though, there's likely not enough depth to create significant challenges to the holdovers, who will have to level up to avoid a repeat of last year's crash.

SPECIALISTS Kicker Jacob Barnes has hit 29-of-35 field-goal attempts over the past two seasons, including 8-of-13 from beyond 40 yards; he could also be in the mix to resume punting duties, which he handled in 2020. On returns, the diminutive Harris is always dangerous with the ball in his hands.

FINAL ANALYSIS Skip Holtz won more games at Tech than any other coach at the FBS level, compiling a 64–50 record over nine seasons. Still, a conference championship eluded him, and a 3–9 debacle in 2021 left little doubt that the project had run out of gas. Cumbie arrives with the program at a crossroads after the latest round of conference realignment. If the Bulldogs are looking for a way out of C-USA in the near future, restoring a winning product on the field would certainly help their cause.


SMOKE HARRIS

Matthew Pearce/Icon Sportswire via Getty Images

> "They're going to overhaul both sides, so it will be interesting to watch their recruiting and portal work. They've lost a step recruiting Louisiana."
>
> —An opposing C-USA assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	DeAnthony Gatson, RB, Newton, TX	★★★
2	Jhamal Shelby Jr., CB, New Orleans, LA	★★★
3	Keshlon Jackson, WR, Lake Charles, LA	★★★
4	O'Ryan James, WR, Houma, LA	★★★
5	Devontae Mozee, S, Jonesboro, LA	★★★
6	Zy Ford, LB, Maben, MS	★★★
7	Zyion Claville, WR, Shreveport, LA	★★★
8	Landry Lyddy, QB, Shreveport, LA	★★★
9	Buck Buchanan, K, Marshall, TX	★★★
10	Landon Nelson, OL, Underwood, IA*	★★★

*junior college transfer

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	**83**	**Tre Harris (So.)**	88	Kyle Maxwell (So.)
WR	8	Devonta Lee (Jr.)	85	Cyrus Allen (Fr.)
WR	**6**	**Smoke Harris (Jr.)**	89	Tahj Magee (Jr.)
LT	**76**	**Biron Rossell (Jr.)**	73	Kenneth Bannister (Fr.)
LG	**64**	**Joshua Mote (Sr.)**	75	Jerren Gilbert (So.)
C	**62**	**Abraham Delfin (Sr.)**	65	Carson Bruno (Fr.)
RG	72	Isaac Ellis (Jr.)	79	Bert Hale (So.)
RT	68	Dakota White (So.)	74	Jonah Brewster (So.)
TE	**5**	**Griffin Hebert (Sr.)**	82	Ivan Thomas (Jr.)
QB	7	Matthew Downing (Jr.)	17	Parker McNeil (Sr.)
RB	25	Greg Garner (Sr.)	21	Keyon Henry-Brooks (Jr.)

DEFENSE (8)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	**93**	**Deshon Hall (Jr.)**	51	Nelson Mbanasor (Sr.)
NT	**94**	**Keivie Rose (So.)**	90	DJ Jackson (Jr.)
DT	**43**	**Tristan Allen (Sr.)**	95	Rasheed Lyles (Jr.)
OLB	**56**	**Mykol Clark (So.)**	20	Kershawn Fisher (So.)
LB	**52**	**Tyler Grubbs (So.)**	54	Allen Walker (So.)
LB	44	Maki Carabin (So.)	9	Hugh Davis (Jr.)
CB	**11**	**Cedric Woods (So.)**		Jhamal Shelby Jr. (Fr.)
CB	13	Myles Brooks (Jr.)	22	Willie Roberts (Jr.)
NB	17	Brodrick Calhoun (Jr.)	19	Taz Marshall (Fr.)
SS	**4**	**BeeJay Williamson (Jr.)**	31	Christian Archangel (So.)
FS	**7**	**Jaiden Cole (Sr.)**	18	Myles Mason (Sr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	35	Jacob Barnes (So.)	**KR**	86	Solomon Lewis (Fr.)
P	34	Austin McCready (Fr.)	**PR**	6	Smoke Harris (Jr.)

MTSU BLUE RAIDERS

National Forecast: 111 • C-USA Prediction: 8 • Projected Record: 4-8, 3-5 C-USA

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	at James Madison
Sept. 10	at Colorado State
Sept. 17	Tennessee State
Sept. 24	at Miami (Fla.)
Sept. 30	UTSA
Oct. 8	at UAB
Oct. 15	WKU
Oct. 29	at UTEP
Nov. 5	at Louisiana Tech
Nov. 12	Charlotte
Nov. 19	Florida Atlantic
Nov. 26	at FIU

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 7-6, 4-4 C-USA

Sept. 4	Monmouth	W	50-15
Sept. 11	at Virginia Tech	L	14-35
Sept. 18	at UTSA	L	13-27
Sept. 24	at Charlotte	L	39-42
Oct. 2	Marshall	W	34-28
Oct. 9	at Liberty	L	13-41
Oct. 22	at UConn	W	44-13
Oct. 30	Southern Miss	W	35-10
Nov. 6	at WKU	L	21-48
Nov. 13	FIU	W	50-10
Nov. 20	Old Dominion	L	17-24
Nov. 27	at Florida Atlantic	W	27-17
Dec. 17	vs. Toledo #	W	31-24

#Bahamas Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	CUSA	NATIONAL
Scoring	29.8 ppg	4	53
Rushing	123.8 ypg	10	100
Passing	238.5 ypg	9	63
Total	362.2 ypg	12	96
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**CUSA**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	25.7 ppg	5	57
Rushing	136.4 ypg	4	38
Passing	236.5 ypg	6	79
Total	372.9 ypg	5	59
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**CUSA**	**NATIONAL**
+11	+0.85	2	7

STAT CORNER

-0.056

MTSU averaged -0.056 EPA/play on offense (114th). The Raiders ranked 113th in rushing explosiveness (-0.086 EPA/rush) and 93rd in passing explosiveness (-0.033 EPA/pass).

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Chase Cunningham, 176-110-1,318-3, 16 TDs
Rushing: Frank Peasant, 79 att., 303 yds., 3 TDs
Receiving: Yusuf Ali, 45 rec., 472 yds., 4 TDs
Tackles: Jordan Ferguson, 58
Sacks: Jordan Ferguson, 9.0
Interceptions: Six players tied with 1

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Rick Stockstill
Record at School: 101-98 (16 years)
Career Record: 101-98 (16 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Mitch Stewart
Defensive Coordinator: Scott Shafer
Location: Murfreesboro, TN
Stadium: Floyd Stadium (30,788)

OFFENSE Middle Tennessee will transition from a spread to an Air Raid offense under new coordinator Mitch Stewart, the former Murray State head coach and Samford offensive coordinator. The Blue Raiders have two good options at quarterback and potential depth at wide receiver, but only one starter is back on the line.

Last season, Nicholas Vattiato (1,047 passing yards, seven TDs, six INTs) took over at quarterback as a freshman after starter Chase Cunningham (1,318 passing yards, 16 TDs, three INTs) tore his ACL. Cunningham is expected to fully recover before the season, which opens the door for him to start and Vattiato to take the redshirt that was planned a year ago.

Jaylin Lane (42 rec., 466 yards, four TDs) leads an experienced group of wide receivers. Junior college transfer Quaterrius Tolbert and freshman Jaylen Ward, the team's top signee of the 2022 class, should add depth.

Kansas State transfer Joe Ervin and West Virginia transfer A'Varius Sparrow could factor into a running back committee. But there are big holes on the offensive line, which was hit hard by the transfer portal. Junior college transfers must start immediately there.

DEFENSE MTSU led FBS in takeaways per game and defensive TDs and tied for second in Conference USA in tackles for a loss as one of college football's best big-play defenses. Even though the top four tacklers have departed, enough pieces are back to make an encore possible.

Defensive coordinator Scott Shafer must rebuild his secondary. Cornerback Teldrick Ross (team-high 12 pass breakups) and other defensive backs must evolve from role players to tone-setters. Safety is a big concern.

But the Blue Raiders are loaded on the defensive line. Defensive end Jordan Ferguson (17.5 tackles for a loss, 9.0 sacks, 13 quarterback hurries) is among the most disruptive players in C-USA. Louisville transfer Ja'Darien Boykin will add to the depth and athleticism up front.

Steady senior Johnathan Butler returns at linebacker. If Louisville transfer Zayvionne Peterson can make an early impact, it would help stabilize the linebacking corps.

SPECIALISTS Lane is one of the nation's top punt returners, averaging 15.5 yards per return with one TD. He's also a solid kick returner. Placekicker Zeke Rankin made 10-of-14 field goals as a freshman. Three-year starting punter Kyle Ulbrich has a big leg, averaging 44.3 yards per boot in 2021.

FINAL ANALYSIS Like many Group of Five teams, MTSU has lost valuable underclassmen to the transfer portal. It must reload with junior college transfers and young developmental players. Do both, and the Blue Raiders can stay in the top half of a revamped C-USA. Toss-up road games against James Madison, a new FBS member, and Colorado State to start the season will set the tone. But there's a moderate risk because the Blue Raiders could be working out kinks in the new offense in September, so the defense must thrive early.

JORDAN FERGUSON

MTSU Athletics

> "A lot of people thought last year might be it for Rick Stockstill, and then they caught fire down the stretch. They're going to try to ride that offense, go fast and play a lot of tempo."
>
> —An opposing C-USA assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Jaylen Ward, WR, Alabaster, AL	★★★
2	Kyle Lowe, QB, Somerville, TN	★★★
3	Brandon Connard, RB, Nashville, TN	★★★
4	Devin Riles, ATH, Atlanta, GA	★★★
5	Quaterrius Tolbert, WR, Ellisville, MS*	★★★
6	Keylan Rutledge, OT, Carnesville, GA	★★★
7	Mateo Guevara, OL, Flowery Branch, GA	★★★
8	Seth Falley, OL, Wichita, KS*	★★★
9	Ethan Ellis, OT, Murfreesboro, TN*	n/r
10	Emmanuel Mann, CB, Columbus, GA*	n/r

*junior college transfer

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (2)

WR	86	JaMichael Thompson (So.)	20	Quaterrius Tolbert (Jr.)
WR	89	Yusuf Ali (Sr.)	7	DJ England-Chisolm (Jr.)
WR	2	Izaiah Gathings (Sr.)	87	Marquel Tinsley (So.)
WR	**83**	**Jaylin Lane (So.)**	85	Jaylen Ward (Fr.)
LT		Ethan Ellis (Jr.)	61	J'Shun Bodiford (So.)
LG		Sterling Porcher (So.)	70	Tyler Falvey (Jr.)
C	**62**	**Jordan Palmer (Sr.)**	63	Wilson Kelly (Fr.)
RG	67	Seth Falley (Jr.)	66	Alex Jones (Fr.)
RT	55	Jahlil Ryles (Jr.)		Joseph Stone (So.)
QB	16	Chase Cunningham (Sr.)	11	Nicholas Vattiato (So.)
RB	36	Frank Peasant (So.)	21	Joe Ervin (So.)

DEFENSE (6) Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	**0**	**Richard Kinley (So.)**	10	Ja'Darien Boykin (So.)
DT	57	Marley Cook (So.)	**91**	**Ja'Kerrius Wyatt (Sr.)**
DT	**96**	**Zaylin Wood (So.)**	99	Jordan Branch (Jr.)
DE	**9**	**Jordan Ferguson (Sr.)**	49	Jorden Starling (Jr.)
SLB	35	Jalen Davis (So.)	40	Drew Francis (So.)
MLB	**4**	**Johnathan Butler (Sr.)**	8	Devyn Curtis (Fr.)
WLB	41	Raquon Hartley (So.)	27	Zayvionne Peterson (So.)
CB	23	Jalen Jackson (So.)	5	Deonte Stanley (So.)
CB	**19**	**Teldrick Ross (Jr.)**	33	Decorian Patterson (Jr.)
SS	17	Tra Fluellen (Jr.)	37	James Shellman IV (Fr.)
FS	30	Marvae Myers-Glover (So.)	28	Deidrick Stanley II (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	7	Zeke Rankin (Fr.)	KR	83	Jaylin Lane (So.)
P	13	Kyle Ulbrich (Sr.)	PR	83	Jaylin Lane (So.)

NORTH TEXAS MEAN GREEN

National Forecast: 107 • C-USA Prediction: 6 • Projected Record: 6-6, 4-4 C-USA

2022 SCHEDULE

Aug. 27	at UTEP
Sept. 3	SMU
Sept. 10	Texas Southern
Sept. 17	at UNLV
Sept. 24	at Memphis
Oct. 1	Florida Atlantic
Oct. 15	Louisiana Tech
Oct. 22	at UTSA
Oct. 29	at WKU
Nov. 5	FIU
Nov. 12	at UAB
Nov. 26	Rice

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 6-7, 5-3 C-USA

Sept. 4	Northwestern St.	W	44-14
Sept. 11	at SMU	L	12-35
Sept. 18	UAB	L	6-40
Sept. 25	at Louisiana Tech	L	17-24
Oct. 9	at Missouri	L	35-48
Oct. 15	Marshall	L	21-49
Oct. 23	Liberty	L	26-35
Oct. 30	at Rice (ot)	W	30-24
Nov. 6	at Southern Miss	W	38-14
Nov. 13	UTEP	W	20-17
Nov. 20	at FIU	W	49-7
Nov. 27	UTSA	W	45-23
Dec. 23	vs. Miami (Ohio) #	L	14-27

#Frisco Football Classic

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	CUSA	NATIONAL
Scoring	27.5 ppg	8	77
Rushing	233.5 ypg	1	5
Passing	197.1 ypg	13	98
Total	430.5 ypg	4	41

DEFENSE	PER GAME	CUSA	NATIONAL
Scoring	27.5 ppg	8	79
Rushing	152.4 ypg	6	66
Passing	230.5 ypg	5	69
Total	382.8 ypg	6	68

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	CUSA	NATIONAL
0	0.00	6	70

STAT CORNER

34.1%

North Texas held opponents to a 34.1 percent rushing success rate, 12th in the nation. The Mean Green allowed 4.62 yards per rush and a -0.062 EPA/rush.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Austin Aune, 295-151-1,991-9, 9 TDs
Rushing: Ikaika Ragsdale, 100 att., 534 yds., 5 TDs
Receiving: Roderic Burns, 58 rec., 802 yds., 4 TDs
Tackles: KD Davis, 121
Sacks: KD Davis, 5.5
Interceptions: Kevin Wood, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Seth Littrell
Record at School: 37-38 (6 years)
Career Record: 37-38 (6 years)
Offensive Coordinators: Mike Bloesch
Defensive Coordinator: Phil Bennett
Location: Denton, TX
Stadium: Apogee Stadium (30,850)

Manny Flores/North Texas Athletics

OFFENSE North Texas returns four starters on an O-line that produced the No. 5 rushing offense in the nation and allowed only 15 sacks, the eighth fewest last season. The problem is that the offense was lopsided because of an ineffective passing attack. Senior guard/center Manase Mose, who will start for a fifth straight season, anchors the line. Running backs Ikaika Ragsdale, Ayo Adeyi and Isaiah Johnson combined for 1,389 rushing yards and 16 TDs last season. They will share carries with Oscar Adaway III, who returns from an ACL tear.

Quarterback is a big question. Austin Aune, who spent six years as an outfielder in the Yankees organization, will turn 29 in September. He started nine games last season and passed for 1,991 yards, with nine TDs and nine interceptions. For better or worse, he is a known quantity. Aune may be the best option, especially with an improved receiving corps, but Jace Ruder could compete for the job for a second straight season.

Roderic Burns (58 rec., 802 yards) is a proven producer in the slot. Wide receivers Jyaire Shorter and Tommy Bush are back after missing 11 games each with injuries.

DEFENSE Dynamic defensive ends and twin brothers Gabriel and Grayson Murphy transferred to UCLA in a double whammy for the Mean Green. It spurred an overhaul of the defensive line, which must be rebuilt to complement an experienced back seven in the 4-2-5 scheme.

Enoch Jackson, who transferred from Arkansas in 2021, is at tackle. Juco transfer Tom Trieb will come off the edge. They join nose guard Roderick Brown, who earned C-USA All-Freshman honors last season.

Linebacker is in great shape. KD Davis is among the best defenders in C-USA and led the league with 121 tackles. Larry Nixon III (71 tackles) and Kevin Wood (52 tackles, two interceptions) complete the unit.

Quinn Whitlock is back after missing half of 2021 with an injury. He can afford to move from cornerback to Eagle, a hybrid linebacker-safety spot, since starting cornerbacks John Davis and DeShawn Gaddie return. Utah State transfer Zahodri Jackson and other experienced DBs should strengthen the secondary.

SPECIALISTS Ethan Mooney was the most accurate placekicker in C-USA, making 11-of-13 field goals (84.6 percent) and all 40 PATs. Punter Bernardo Rodriguez has a big leg (43.9-yard average) and enters his third season as a starter since transferring from Kansas State.

FINAL ANALYSIS After back-to-back nine-win seasons in 2017-18, Seth Littrell has posted three straight losing records. Before the 2021 season, Littrell signed an amendment that potentially lessened the buyout of his contract, which runs through 2023. It points to a make-or-break season to extend his tenure.

North Texas must balance the offense with better quarterback play and fill holes on the defensive line. Both are within reach, but they must occur quickly to avoid repeating the disastrous 1–6 start of 2021.

RODERIC BURNS

"Seth [Littrell] knows what he's doing, but they've got to come out hot. This program offers amazing facilities and a great location. They've got to put the pieces back together this year."

—An opposing C-USA assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Cam Robertson, Edge, Plano, TX	★★★
2	Qualon Farrar, RB, Dallas, TX	★★★
3	Dameon Smallwood, OL, Denison, TX	★★★
4	Howard Sampson, OT, Humble, TX	★★★
5	Samora Ezekiel, OT, Fort Worth, TX	★★★
6	Patrick Smith, CB, Sugar Land, TX	★★★
7	Mohammed Bility, CB, Dallas, TX	★★★
8	Jax Van Zandt, LB, Alabaster, AL	★★★
9	Tom Trieb, DL, Buffalo Grove, IL*	★★★
10	Ethan Wesloski, LB, McKinney, TX	★★

*junior college transfer

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)

WR	**83**	**Damon Ward (So.)**	5	Tommy Bush (Jr.)
WR	**14**	**Roderic Burns (Jr.)**	9	Jay Maclin (Fr.)
WR	**16**	**Jyaire Shorter (Jr.)**	0	Bryson Jackson (Jr.)
LT	**73**	**Cole Brown (Jr.)**	77	Kaci Moreka (Jr.)
LG	**65**	**Gabe Blair (So.)**	71	Leke Asenuga (Fr.)
C	**78**	**Daizion Carroll (Jr.)**	52	Dane Jackson (Fr.)
RG	**72**	**Manase Mose (Sr.)**	54	Febechi Nwaiwu (Fr.)
RT	64	Jett Duncan (So.)	74	Nick Gallo (So.)
TE	87	Jake Roberts (So.)	89	Asher Alberding (So.)
QB	**2**	**Austin Aune (Jr.)**	10	Jace Ruder (Jr.)
RB	25	Ikaika Ragsdale (So.)	39	Ayo Adeyi (So.)

DEFENSE (5)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	98	Tom Trieb (So.)	16	Jonathan Pickett (Fr.)
NG	93	Roderick Brown (So.)	51	Fatafehi Vailea (Fr.)
DT	99	Enoch Jackson (So.)	95	Kortlin Rausaw (Fr.)
DE	59	Sifa Leota (Fr.)	15	Carson Kropp (Jr.)
MLB	**1**	**KD Davis (Sr.)**	19	Jordan Brown (So.)
WLB	30	Larry Nixon III (Jr.)	**21**	**Kevin Wood (Jr.)**
CB	**2**	**DeShawn Gaddie (Jr.)**	14	Zahodri Jackson (Sr.)
CB	**8**	**John Davis (Jr.)**	26	Ridge Texada (So.)
EAG	24	Quinn Whitlock (Sr.)	**25**	**Sean-Thomas Faulkner (Sr.)**
S	22	Keelan Crosby (Jr.)	4	Dillion Williams (So.)
S	10	Nick Nakwaasah (So.)	27	Harold West (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	0	Ethan Mooney (Sr.)	**KR**	19	Caleb Johnson (Fr.)
P	32	Bernardo Rodriguez (Sr.)	**PR**	14	Roderic Burns (Jr.)

RICE OWLS

National Forecast: 123 • C-USA Prediction: 10 • Projected Record: 4-8, 3-5 C-USA

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	at USC
Sept. 10	McNeese
Sept. 17	Louisiana
Sept. 24	at Houston
Oct. 1	UAB
Oct. 15	at Florida Atlantic
Oct. 22	at Louisiana Tech
Oct. 29	Charlotte
Nov. 5	UTEP
Nov. 12	at WKU
Nov. 19	UTSA
Nov. 26	at North Texas

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 4-8, 3-5 C-USA

Sept. 4	at Arkansas	L	17-38
Sept. 11	Houston	L	7-44
Sept. 18	at Texas	L	0-58
Sept. 25	Texas Southern	W	48-34
Oct. 2	Southern Miss	W	24-19
Oct. 16	at UTSA	L	0-45
Oct. 23	at UAB	W	30-24
Oct. 30	North Texas (ot)	L	24-30
Nov. 6	at Charlotte (ot)	L	24-31
Nov. 13	WKU	L	21-42
Nov. 20	at UTEP	L	28-38
Nov. 27	Louisiana Tech	W	35-31

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	CUSA	NATIONAL
Scoring	21.5 ppg	12	107
Rushing	150.3 ypg	7	74
Passing	211.7 ypg	11	87
Total	362.0 ypg	13	97

DEFENSE	PER GAME	CUSA	NATIONAL
Scoring	36.2 ppg	13	120
Rushing	161.8 ypg	9	83
Passing	273.8 ypg	14	123
Total	435.5 ypg	11	108

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	CUSA	NATIONAL
-3	-0.25	8	87

STAT CORNER

29.4%

Even though the Owls ranked 74th in the nation in rushing at 150.3 yards per game, they ranked only 128th in rushing efficiency, averaging a 29.4 percent success rate and 4.32 yards per play.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Wiley Green, 55-36-414-3, 4 TDs
Rushing: Ari Broussard, 116 att., 569 yds., 3 TDs
Receiving: C. Patterson, 38 rec., 583 yds., 6 TDs
Tackles: Josh Pearcy, 58
Sacks: Ikenna Enechukwu, 4.5
Interceptions: Gabe Taylor, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Mike Bloomgren
Record at School: 11-31 (4 years)
Career Record: 11-31 (4 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Marques Tuiasosopo
Defensive Coordinator: Brian Smith
Location: Houston, TX
Stadium: Rice Stadium (47,000)

OFFENSE In a Week 3 loss to Texas last season, Rice head coach Mike Bloomgren was forced to use three quarterbacks — and that was just the first quarter. The game was a microcosm of the Owls' misfortunes at the position. The battle in 2022 is between TJ McMahon and Wiley Green, who split reps during spring practices.

Offensive coordinator Marques Tuiasosopo has added wrinkles to the offense, but Rice's identity remains the same: "Pound the rock, control the clock" with a pro-style offense that regularly features a fullback and two-tight-end sets. Ari Broussard has a chance to be among C-USA's top backs and will be joined by speedster Cameron Montgomery, Juma Otoviano and newcomer Dean Connors, who could be dangerous out of the backfield.

The decision by Luke McCaffrey to switch from quarterback to receiver and the presence of a healthy Bradley Rozner — who missed all but one game the past two seasons due to injuries — will help soften the loss of Jake Bailey, who opted to transfer two days into spring practice. Kobie Campbell appears ready to take the next step, and the Owls added Sam Crawford (Tulsa) and Isaiah Esdale (West Virginia) through the transfer portal.

Four players with starting experience return on the offensive line, led by left tackle Clay Servin and right guard Shea Baker, but across-the-board depth is a concern.

DEFENSE Gone is All-C-USA performer Elijah Garcia, but the Owls feature a formidable group that includes Ikenna Enechukwu, De'Braylon Carroll, Izeya Floyd, Trey Schuman and Blake Boenisch. Enechukwu, who had 4.5 sacks and eight TFLs, was given a draftable grade but chose to come back. Carroll could be one of C-USA's top interior linemen.

Treshawn Chamberlain, a fifth-year starter at the linebacker/safety hybrid VIPER spot, is coming off an injury, while Josh Pearcy (four sacks, 7.5 TFLs) "has a chance to make some noise" at the rush end spot, Bloomgren says, along with Kenneth Orji.

There are plenty of options in the secondary, led by strong safety Gabe Taylor and free safety George Nyakwol, who was granted a sixth year of eligibility. Miles McCord was hurt during the spring, allowing Sean Fresch and Jordan Dunbar to get most of the cornerback reps. Freshman cornerback Jonathan Jean was the surprise of the spring with his physical play.

SPECIALISTS More production is needed out of the kicking game, specifically on field goals, where Rice was 5-of-11. Christian VanSickle will be challenged by transfer Tim Horn, who did not attempt a field goal in three seasons at Washington. Punter Charlie Mendes averaged 41.9 yards. Fresch will handle the return game.

FINAL ANALYSIS The four wins last season were the most since Bloomgren arrived, and the Owls were two overtime losses away from their first bowl appearance since 2014. The non-conference schedule is tough with USC in the opener and crosstown rival Houston, so Rice will need to steal a few games in C-USA play.

ARI BROUSSARD

Rice Athletics

> "Everyone in the league has a tremendous amount of respect for Mike [Bloomgren] and his staff. He should get as long as he wants to try to find a path to success here."
>
> —An opposing C-USA assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Rawson MacNeill, WR, Marietta, GA	★★★
2	Davion Carter, DL, Mesquite, TX	★★★
3	Tyson Flowers, S, Ft. Worth, TX	★★★
4	Miguel Cedeno, OT, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	★★★
5	AJ Padgett, QB, Frisco, TX	★★★
6	Chibby Nwajuaku, DL, Cypress, TX	★★★
7	DeMone Green, DL, Houston, TX	★★★
8	Quinton Jackson, WR, Ft. Worth, TX	★★★
9	Braylen Walker, WR, Lake Charles, LA	★★
10	Dean Connors, RB, Riverside, CA*	n/r

*junior college transfer

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

WR	9	Sam Crawford (Sr.)	12	Luke McCaffrey (So.)
WR	**4**	**Cedric Patterson III (Sr.)**	**2**	**Bradley Rozner (Sr.)**
WR	17	Kobie Campbell (So.)		Isaiah Esdale (Sr.)
LT	**71**	**Clay Servin (Jr.)**	72	Trey Phillippi (Fr.)
LG	**52**	**Braedon Nutter (So.)**	62	Faae Pepe (So.)
C	**54**	**Isaac Klarkowski (So.)**	58	Shea Baker (Sr.)
RG	**58**	**Shea Baker (Sr.)**	76	John Long (Fr.)
RT	78	Ethan Onianwa (Fr.)	53	Mike Leone (Fr.)
TE	**87**	**Jack Bradley (Jr.)**	82	Gavin Reinwald (Sr.)
QB	7	TJ McMahon (Jr.)	5	Wiley Green (So.)
RB	30	Ari Broussard (Jr.)	1	Cameron Montgomery (Sr.)

DEFENSE (10)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	**7**	**Trey Schuman (Sr.)**	99	Cole Latos (Fr.)
NT	50	Izeya Floyd (So.)	75	Blake Boenisch (Fr.)
DT	**91**	**Ikenna Enechukwu (Jr.)**	**55**	**De'Braylon Carroll (So.)**
RUSH	**10**	**Kenneth Orji (Sr.)**	12	Josh Pearcy (So.)
VIPER	**17**	**Treshawn Chamberlain (Jr.)**	41	Plae Wyatt (So.)
MLB	35	Aidan Siano (So.)	21	Garrett Braden (Fr.)
WLB	42	Kenny Seymour Jr. (Fr.)	27	Andrew Awe (So.)
CB	**25**	**Jordan Dunbar (So.)**	**24**	**Miles McCord (Sr.)**
CB	**29**	**Sean Fresch (So.)**	13	Lamont Narcisse (So.)
SS	**26**	**Gabe Taylor (So.)**	31	Marcus Williams (Fr.)
FS	**20**	**George Nyakwol (Sr.)**	38	Josh Williams (Fr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	15	Tim Horn (So.)	**KR**	29	Sean Fresch (So.)
P	99	Charlie Mendes (So.)	**PR**	29	Sean Fresch (So.)

UAB BLAZERS

National Forecast: 64 • C-USA Prediction: 1 • Projected Record: 9-4, 6-2 C-USA

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	Alabama A&M
Sept. 10	at Liberty
Sept. 17	Georgia Southern
Oct. 1	at Rice
Oct. 8	Middle Tennessee
Oct. 15	Charlotte
Oct. 22	at WKU
Oct. 29	at Florida Atlantic
Nov. 5	UTSA
Nov. 12	North Texas
Nov. 19	at LSU
Nov. 26	at Louisiana Tech

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 9-4, 6-2 C-USA

Sept. 1	vs. Jacksonville St. #	W	31-0
Sept. 11	at Georgia	L	7-56
Sept. 18	at North Texas	W	40-6
Sept. 25	at Tulane	W	28-21
Oct. 2	Liberty	L	12-36
Oct. 9	Florida Atlantic	W	31-14
Oct. 16	at Southern Miss	W	34-0
Oct. 23	Rice	L	24-30
Nov. 6	Louisiana Tech	W	52-38
Nov. 13	at Marshall	W	21-14
Nov. 20	at UTSA	L	31-34
Nov. 26	UTEP	W	42-25
Dec. 18	vs. BYU %	W	31-28

#Montgomery, AL %Independence Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	CUSA	NATIONAL
Scoring	29.5 ppg	5	55
Rushing	180.2 ypg	3	48
Passing	206.3 ypg	12	90
Total	386.5 ypg	8	74

DEFENSE	PER GAME	CUSA	NATIONAL
Scoring	23.2 ppg	1	41
Rushing	111.5 ypg	1	11
Passing	217.3 ypg	4	48
Total	328.8 ypg	1	16

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	CUSA	NATIONAL
+2	+0.15	5	53

STAT CORNER

5.21

UAB's defense limited opponent efficiency on a per-play basis but struggled in scoring opportunities; the Blazers allowed 5.21 points per quality possession, 119th nationally.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Dylan Hopkins, 235-155-2,274-7, 18 TDs
Rushing: DeWayne McBride, 204 att., 1,371 yds., 13 TDs
Receiving: Trea Shropshire, 27 rec., 703 yds., 7 TDs
Tackles: Noah Wilder, 93
Sacks: Fish McWilliams., 4.0
Interceptions: Grayson Cash, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Bill Clark
Record at School: 49-26 (6 years)
Career Record: 60-30 (7 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Bryant Vincent
Defensive Coordinator: David Reeves
Location: Birmingham, AL
Stadium: Protective Stadium (47,100)

OFFENSE Last season, Dylan Hopkins put up perhaps the best season of any UAB quarterback since the school's return to action in 2017. However, he missed spring due to injury recovery, and Baylor transfer Jacob Zeno had a chance to shine. Bryson Lucero also has starting experience, and the Blazers are high on freshman Dylan Mehrotra. UAB quarterbacks are asked to run in this offense, so having depth at the position is crucial.

The run game will be strong with leading returning rushers DeWayne "Debo" McBride and Jermaine Brown Jr. back, along with Lee Witherspoon (missed 2021 due to injury) and junior college transfer Zeus Perryman.

Trea Shropshire was UAB's big-play receiver last year and will lead an experienced group, but one that needs more explosiveness. Tejhaun Palmer stepped up late last season and could be a breakout performer. The tight end position is crucial for this offense, and UAB expects a breakout season from Terrell McDonald. Bryce Damous, Maleak Bryant and some signees will also contribute.

UAB returns three starters on the O-line, and Eli Richey should slot in at left guard on a formidable front.

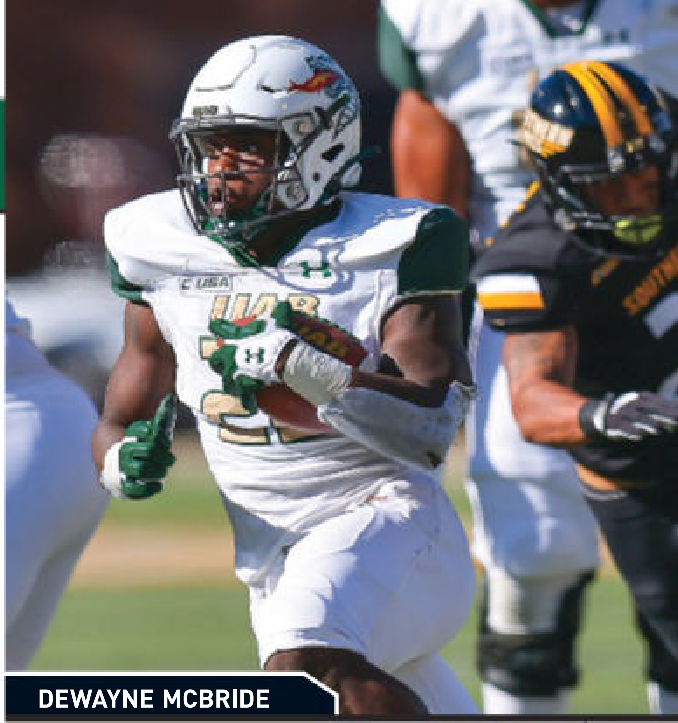
DEFENSE Noah Wilder returns to lead an experienced group at inside linebacker. Deshaun Oliver and Tyler Taylor will get competition from the speedy Reynard Ellis after his productive career at Georgia Southern. Alabama transfer Jackson Bratton will be a factor too.

The back end is loaded, especially at STAR and safety with Keondre Swoopes, Grayson Cash and Will Boler. Cornerback Mac McWilliams is healthy after battling injuries, and he'll join Starling Thomas V, CD Daniels, Colby Dempsey and Devodric Bynum to form one of C-USA's best groups.

UAB has several questions up front, though. Kelle Sanders showed flashes at JACK but could really break out with more playing time opening up following Alex Wright's move to the NFL. Sanders will battle sixth-year senior Kyle Harrell for main snaps there. Veterans Isaiah Forte and Fish McWilliams will be called on to raise their games, along with rush end Michael Fairbanks. Late juco signee Drew Tuazama should be an impact transfer, and the Blazers need Jalen Mayala to step up in his second season following his transfer from Indiana.

SPECIALISTS Matt Quinn made 49-of-50 extra points, but the Blazers would like to see him improve his accuracy (11-of-16) on field goals. Kyle Greenwell returns for his fifth season as the punter. Reese Burkhardt is back to handle kickoffs, and Brown and Thomas are strong in the return game.

FINAL ANALYSIS UAB is at the point where it is competing for a conference championship every year. For another title run to happen, Hopkins must build on a strong season as a starter, and some tight ends have to step up. Games are won on the line of scrimmage, and UAB has an edge on the offensive line. If the D-line can hold its ground, another division championship is a possibility.


DEWAYNE MCBRIDE

UAB Athletics

> "This is a model G5 program that understands their needs, recruits really well and has consistency in every area. They're going to be relevant for a long time."
>
> —An opposing C-USA assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Joker Gill, DL, Philadelphia, MS*	★★★
2	AJ Brown, S, Marietta, GA	★★★
3	Quez Yates, OT, Ellisville, MS	★★★
4	Tyrique Howard, DL, Fulton, MS*	★★★
5	Carl Fauntroy Jr., S, Spanish Fort, AL	★★★
6	Ryan Gunter, OT, Trussville, AL	★★★
7	Dallas Payne, WR, Bay St. Louis, MS*	★★★
8	Iverson Hooks, ATH, Pike Road, AL	★★★
9	JC Sivley, TE, Helena, AL	★★★
10	Nathaniel Trzpuc, OL, Phenix City, AL*	★★★

*junior college transfer

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

WR	19	Tejhaun Palmer (Sr.)	6	Ryan Davis (Jr.)
WR	**11**	**Trea Shropshire (Sr.)**	3	T.J. Jones (Jr.)
WR	7	Samario Rudolph (Jr.)	13	Fred Farrier II (Fr.)
LT	**77**	**Kadeem Telfort (Sr.)**	79	Trey Bedosky (So.)
LG	76	Eli Richey (Fr.)	67	Tater Reid (Sr.)
C	75	Will Rykard (Jr.)	72	Brady Wilson (So.)
RG	**61**	**Matthew Trehern (Sr.)**	66	Quincy McGee (Sr.)
RT	**62**	**Sidney Wells (Sr.)**	71	Quez Yates (Sr.)
TE	10	Terrell McDonald (Jr.)	48	Bryce Damous (Jr.)
QB	**9**	**Dylan Hopkins (Sr.)**	4	Jacob Zeno (Jr.)
RB	**22**	**DeWayne McBride (Jr.)**	**1**	**Jermaine Brown Jr. (Sr.)**

DEFENSE (5)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

NT	99	Fish McWilliams (Sr.)	92	Kevin Penn (Jr.)
DT	44	Isaiah Forte (Sr.)	95	Joker Gill (Sr.)
SLB	93	Michael Fairbanks II (Sr.)		Drew Tuazama (Jr.)
LB	24	Deshaun Oliver Jr. (Sr.)	7	Tyler Taylor (Sr.)
LB	**50**	**Noah Wilder (Sr.)**	38	Reynard Ellis (Sr.)
JACK	**2**	**Kelle Sanders (Sr.)**	9	Kyle Harrell (Sr.)
CB	**4**	**Starling Thomas V (Sr.)**	33	Colby Dempsey (So.)
CB	5	Mac McWilliams (So.)	3	CD Daniels (Sr.)
STAR	**0**	**Keondre Swoopes (Sr.)**	11	Damien Miller (Jr.)
SS	26	Damon Miller (Sr.)	8	Xavier Lanier (Sr.)
FS	**21**	**Will Boler (Sr.)**	12	Grayson Cash (Sr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	19	Matt Quinn (Jr.)	KR	1	Jermaine Brown Jr. (Sr.)
P	98	Kyle Greenwell (Sr.)	PR	4	Starling Thomas V (Sr.)

UTEP MINERS

National Forecast: 104 • C-USA Prediction: 4 • Projected Record: 6-6, 5-3 C-USA

2022 SCHEDULE

Aug. 27	North Texas
Sept. 3	at Oklahoma
Sept. 10	New Mexico State
Sept. 17	at New Mexico
Sept. 23	Boise State
Oct. 1	at Charlotte
Oct. 8	at Louisiana Tech
Oct. 22	Florida Atlantic
Oct. 29	Middle Tennessee
Nov. 5	at Rice
Nov. 19	FIU
Nov. 26	at UTSA

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 7-6, 4-4 C-USA

Aug. 28	at New Mexico State	W	30-3
Sept. 4	Bethune-Cookman	W	38-28
Sept. 10	at Boise State	L	13-54
Sept. 25	New Mexico	W	20-13
Oct. 2	Old Dominion	W	28-21
Oct. 9	at Southern Miss	W	26-13
Oct. 16	Louisiana Tech	W	19-3
Oct. 30	at Florida Atlantic	L	25-28
Nov. 6	UTSA	L	23-44
Nov. 13	at North Texas	L	17-20
Nov. 20	Rice	W	38-28
Nov. 26	at UAB	L	25-42
Dec. 18	vs. Fresno State #	L	24-31

#New Mexico Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	CUSA	NATIONAL
Scoring	25.1 ppg	11	89
Rushing	139.9 ypg	9	87
Passing	252.1 ypg	7	50
Total	392.0 ypg	7	70

DEFENSE	PER GAME	CUSA	NATIONAL
Scoring	25.2 ppg	4	53
Rushing	138.6 ypg	5	43
Passing	210.8 ypg	3	36
Total	349.4 ypg	2	35

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	CUSA	NATIONAL
-11	-0.85	13	126

STAT CORNER

0.289

UTEP averaged 0.289 EPA/pass in 2021, ranking third in the nation, and averaged 8.91 yards per attempt. Of the Miners' 43 touchdowns, 34 came through the air.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Gavin Hardison, 357-198-3,217-13, 18 TDs
Rushing: Ronald Awatt, 158 att., 844 yds., 6 TDs
Receiving: Tyrin Smith, 33 rec., 570 yds., 4 TDs
Tackles: Breon Hayward, 108
Sacks: Jadrian Taylor, 6.5
Interceptions: Dennis Barnes, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Dana Dimel
Record at School: 12-33 (4 years)
Career Record: 42-72 (10 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Dave Warner
Defensive Coordinator: Bradley Dale Peveto
Location: El Paso, TX
Stadium: Sun Bowl (51,500)

OFFENSE Quarterback Gavin Hardison took a big step toward fulfilling his immense potential last season, and UTEP's first winning year since 2014 proceeded from there. Hardison enters his third season as the starter looking for a new set of targets after 70 percent of UTEP's catches and yards at the wideout position left. How the UTEP offense — which is mostly otherwise intact — checks this box will be a key to the season.

Tyrin Smith is the top returner at receiver and looks well suited to make the jump from No. 3 to main target. Kelly Akharaiyi is looking to be the latest instant-impact junior college transfer and quickly worked his way to the top line on the depth chart in the spring. Jostein Clarke, Jeremiah Ballard and Lucas Flores redshirted last year and should be major cogs this season, along with seventh-year senior Walter Dawn Jr.

Elsewhere, UTEP is full of returning players. Ronald Awatt and Deion Hankins give the Miners a proven 1-2 punch at tailback, and there are three returning starters on the offensive line, all on the right side.

DEFENSE The Miners have two cornerbacks and a safety to replace from the unit that last year had a breakthrough season under first-year coordinator Bradley Dale Peveto, but other than that, there is experience everywhere. Unlike past seasons, that's now a good thing for a defense that propelled the Miners to a bowl and ranked in the top 15 nationally for the first half of last season.

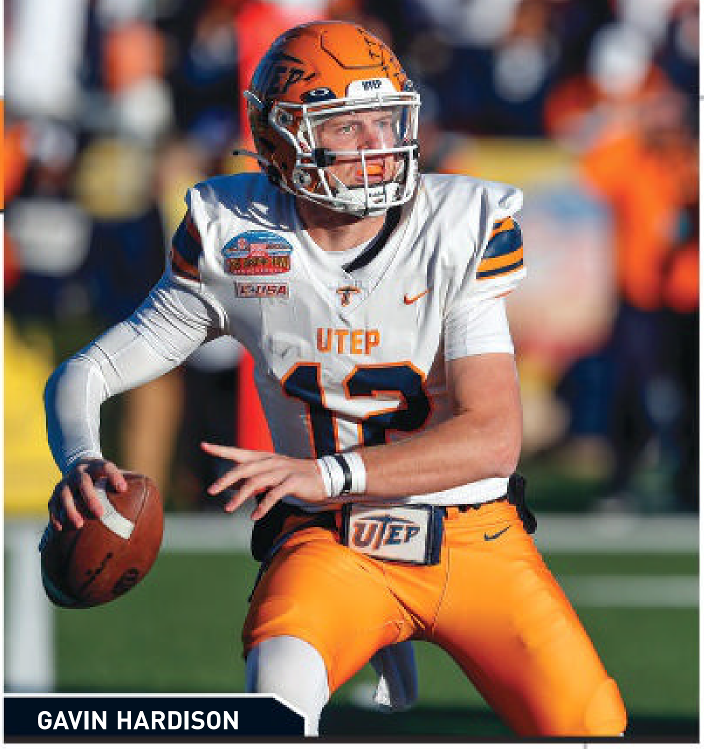
The front six, the strength of the team, returns in its entirety led by all-conference end Praise Amaewhule and end Jadrian Taylor. Tackles Kelton Moss and Keenan Stewart are third-year starters, while prolific tackling linebackers Tyrice Knight and Breon Hayward will be in their second seasons as starters.

Finding new corners is the question mark, and one possibility is moving safety Dennis Barnes. Torey Richardson was the third corner last season, and he is looking to step up, while junior college transfer Josiah Allen is also looking for work.

Transfer safety Kobe Hylton needed only a few spring practices to vault to a starting slot, along with returnees Justin Prince and Barnes.

SPECIALISTS UTEP has solid returners with kicker Gavin Baechle and punter Joshua Sloan, but other than those two, special teams were an eyesore last season. The Miners moved to address that shortcoming by getting transfer returner Marcus Bellon, who had six return TDs in junior college last season. The veteran Dawn also could be an impact kickoff returner.

FINAL ANALYSIS The Miners are seeking their first back-to-back winning seasons since 2004-05. They got here by identifying a recruiting philosophy of pursuing junior college transfers in a new age when they often get overlooked in deference to FBS portal transfers. With such little turnover from that team, UTEP can concentrate on finding receivers and cornerbacks. If they do that reasonably well, they can turn one good year into two.


GAVIN HARDISON

AP Photo/Andres Leighton

"They're really starting to look like those old Kansas State teams Dana Dimel coached, really physical and disciplined; maybe that's their long-term plan."

—An opposing C-USA assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Jake McNamara, QB, Franklin, TN	★★★
2	Aluma Nkele, OT, Gardena, CA*	★★★
3	Trevion Mitchell, OL, Mesquite, TX	★★★
4	Luke Seib, TE, Blue Springs, MO	★★★
5	Josiah Allen, S, Sacramento, CA*	★★★
6	Sedrick Luke, OL, Sacramento, CA*	★★★
7	Amier Boyd-Matthews, ATH, Phoenix, AZ	★★
8	Kelly Akharaiyi, WR, Irving, TX*	★★
9	Samuel Mikaele, WR, Santa Barbara, CA	n/r
10	A.J. Barton, Edge, Garland, TX	n/r

*junior college transfer

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	1	Tyrin Smith (So.)	86	Lucas Flores (Fr.)
WR	4	Kelly Akharaiyi (So.)	3	Reynaldo Flores (Sr.)
WR	9	Jostein Clarke (So.)	0	Jeremiah Ballard (Fr.)
LT	68	Zuri Henry (Sr.)	78	Aluma Nkele (So.)
LG	66	Justin Mayers (So.)	74	Azizi Henry (Fr.)
C	**75**	**Andrew Meyer (Jr.)**	60	Joseph Immediato (Fr.)
RG	**79**	**Elijah Klein (Jr.)**	59	Otis Pitts III (So.)
RT	**63**	**Jeremiah Byers (So.)**	65	Jagves Garnett (Jr.)
TE	**45**	**Trent Thompson (Sr.)**	87	Zach Fryar (Jr.)
QB	**2**	**Gavin Hardison (Jr.)**	7	Calvin Brownholtz (Jr.)
RB	**22**	**Ronald Awatt (Sr.)**	33	Deion Hankins (So.)

DEFENSE (8)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	**23**	**Praise Amaewhule (Jr.)**	42	Deylon Williams (Sr.)
DT	**7**	**Kelton Moss (Sr.)**	48	Blake Thompson (Sr.)
DT	**54**	**Keenan Stewart (Jr.)**	94	Jalen Rudolph (So.)
DE	**11**	**Jadrian Taylor (Sr.)**	0	Maurice Westmoreland (So.)
MLB	**10**	**Tyrice Knight (Sr.)**	6	Gary Theard (Sr.)
WLB	**17**	**Breon Hayward (Sr.)**	5	James Neal (Jr.)
CB	8	Torey Richardson (Jr.)	18	John Burris III (Fr.)
CB	22	Josiah Allen (So.)	31	Carrington Mitchell (So.)
NB	**13**	**Dennis Barnes (Sr.)**	**1**	**Tyson Wilson (Jr.)**
SS	2	Kobe Hylton (So.)	3	Ty'Reke James (Sr.)
FS	21	Justin Prince (Sr.)	24	McKel Broussard (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	40	Gavin Baechle (Sr.)	KR	26	Walter Dawn Jr. (Sr.)
P	13	Joshua Sloan (So.)	PR	21	Marcus Bellon (So.)

UTSA ROADRUNNERS

National Forecast: 65 • C-USA Prediction: 2 • Projected Record: 7-6, 6-2 C-USA

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Houston
Sept. 10	at Army
Sept. 17	at Texas
Sept. 24	Texas Southern
Sept. 30	at Middle Tennessee
Oct. 8	WKU
Oct. 14	at FIU
Oct. 22	North Texas
Nov. 5	at UAB
Nov. 12	Louisiana Tech
Nov. 19	at Rice
Nov. 26	UTEP

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 12-2, 7-1 C-USA

Sept. 4	at Illinois	W	37-30
Sept. 11	Lamar	W	54-0
Sept. 18	Middle Tennessee	W	27-13
Sept. 25	at Memphis	W	31-28
Oct. 2	UNLV	W	24-17
Oct. 9	at WKU	W	52-46
Oct. 16	Rice	W	45-0
Oct. 23	at Louisiana Tech	W	45-16
Nov. 6	at UTEP	W	44-23
Nov. 13	Southern Miss	W	27-17
Nov. 20	UAB	W	34-31
Nov. 27	at North Texas	L	23-45
Dec. 3	WKU #	W	49-41
Dec. 21	vs. San Diego St. %	L	24-38

#C-USA Championship %Frisco Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	CUSA	NATIONAL
Scoring	36.9 ppg	2	11
Rushing	183.5 ypg	2	43
Passing	255.5 ypg	5	43
Total	439.0 ypg	3	34

DEFENSE	PER GAME	CUSA	NATIONAL
Scoring	24.6 ppg	3	50
Rushing	114.7 ypg	2	14
Passing	258.0 ypg	9	105
Total	372.7 ypg	4	58

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	CUSA	NATIONAL
+12	+0.86	1	5

STAT CORNER

46.4%

UTSA ranked 8th nationally in passing efficiency, averaging a 46.4 percent success rate and 0.209 EPA/pass.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Frank Harris, 398-263-3,177-6, 27 TDs
Rushing: Frank Harris, 109 att., 566 yds., 6 TDs
Receiving: Zakhari Franklin, 81 rec., 1,027 yds., 12 TDs
Tackles: Rashad Wisdom, 88
Sacks: Trumane Bell II, 5.0
Interceptions: Corey Mayfield Jr., 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Jeff Traylor
Record at School: 19-7 (2 years)
Career Record: 19-7 (2 years)
Offensive Coordinators: Matt Mattox, Will Stein
Defensive Coordinator: Jess Loepp
Location: San Antonio, TX
Stadium: Alamodome (36,582)

OFFENSE Running back Sincere McCormick took his various All-America honors and moved on to the NFL. Fear not, however, as the Roadrunners were not nearly as run-dependent as one might think. UTSA's passing offense went from a national ranking of No. 90 in 2020 to No. 43 in 2021 and will likely rise even higher in head coach Jeff Traylor's third season. Senior quarterback Frank Harris and his three productive senior wideouts are all back, which means the offense may sincerely move forward without Sincere. Harris (3,177 passing yards, 27 TDs, six INTs, plus 566 rushing yards) improved his accuracy last season, and WRs Zakhari Franklin, Joshua Cephus and De'Corian Clark all had at least 750 yards, with Franklin earning first-team All-C-USA honors.

Four starters are back on the offensive line, but the one who departed — left tackle Spencer Burford — was the best in school history. Center Ahofitu Maka was a second-team All-C-USA selection.

If newcomer Tye Edwards and De'Anthony Lewis form a capable backfield and Harris and Co. continue to progress in the passing game, UTSA could produce even more than its 36.9 points per game (11th in the nation).

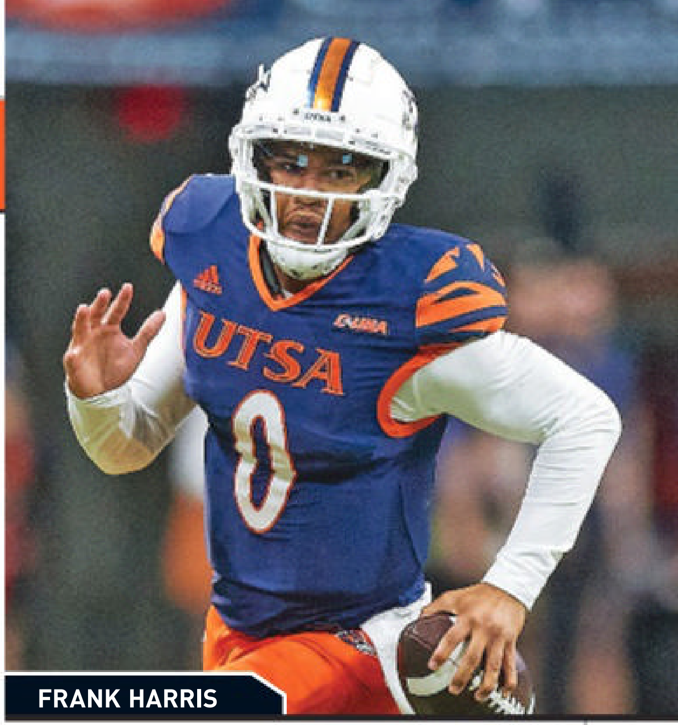
DEFENSE Five starters are back spread evenly across the three levels, so there may be some on-the-job training under second-year defensive coordinator Jess Loepp.

Sophomore nose guard Brandon Brown, an honorable mention All-C-USA performer in 2021, and Lamonte McDougle are two players who give the staff confidence at that spot. Senior DE Brandon Matterson has starting experience sprinkled in across his career, and Asyrus Simon and Trumane Bell II will man the other defensive end spot.

Two inside linebackers return after honorable mention all-league seasons in Jamal Ligon and Trevor Harmanson, while the outside 'backers will be rather green. The secondary, which boasts the team's best defender in safety Rashad Wisdom, needs to improve. Wisdom led the team in tackles and was second in pass breakups. Returning corner Corey Mayfield Jr. had two picks, returning one for a score.

SPECIALISTS Kicker Jared Sackett had two good seasons at UTSA in 2017 and 2018. He transferred to Arkansas and then USF, where he was unable to secure the first-string job at either school. Sackett has returned to UTSA for a fifth college season and looks to regain his old form with the Roadrunners. Punter Lucas Dean was a second-team All-C-USA performer last season, averaging 45.2 yards per kick.

FINAL ANALYSIS UTSA could be close to as good as 2021's 12–2 squad, but the record might not reflect it. UTSA opens against Houston, Army and Texas. The Roadrunners also face a tough WKU team in league play. The offense should be productive, but will it have to put up big numbers each week as the defense takes shape? Either way, another 10-win season for Traylor could put him in line for a Power 5 job sooner rather than later.


FRANK HARRIS

Jeff Huehn/UTSA Athletics

> "It's crazy a Power 5 team in Texas didn't scoop up this staff. If they're actually sticking around, this program is going to be the next Houston or Cincinnati in a few years."
>
> —An opposing C-USA assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Zah Frazier, S, Cedartown, GA*	★★★
2	Owen Pewee, LB, Cypress, TX	★★★
3	Jace Wilson, WR, Denton, TX	★★★
4	Venly Tatafu, OL, Independence, KS	★★★
5	Kaleb Brown, LB, Austin, TX	★★★
6	Camron Cooper, Edge, Dayton, TX	★★★
7	Tai Leonard, DL, Houston, TX	★★★
8	Tye Edwards, RB, St. Augustine, FL*	★★★
9	Houston Thomas, TE, College Station, TX	★★★
10	Ben Rios, OT, San Antonio, TX	★★★

*junior college transfer

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)

WR	**12**	**Joshua Cephus (Sr.)**	14	Isaiah Davis (So.)
WR	**18**	**Zakhari Franklin (Sr.)**	11	Tykee Ogle-Kellogg (Sr.)
WR	**88**	**De'Corian Clark (Sr.)**	13	Tre'Von Bradley (Sr.)
LT	64	Ernesto Almaraz (Sr.)	73	Demetris Allen (Jr.)
LG	**58**	**Terrell Haynes (Sr.)**	75	Venly Tatafu (So.)
C	**55**	**Ahofitu Maka (Sr.)**	71	Rudy Aleman Jr. (Sr.)
RG	**61**	**Kevin Davis (Sr.)**	79	Ronnie Garza (Fr.)
RT	**77**	**Makai Hart (Sr.)**	68	Frankie Martinez (So.)
TE	84	Oscar Cardenas (Jr.)	87	Gavin Sharp (Sr.)
QB	**11**	**Frank Harris (Sr.)**	12	Eddie Lee Marburger (Fr.)
RB	22	Tye Edwards (Jr.)	30	De'Anthony Lewis (Fr.)

DEFENSE (5)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	99	Brandon Matterson (Sr.)	95	Christian Clayton (Jr.)
NT	**90**	**Brandon Brown (So.)**	33	Lamonte McDougle (Sr.)
DE	17	Asyrus Simon (Jr.)	49	Trumane Bell II (Sr.)
OLB	40	Jimmori Robinson (So.)	49	Trumane Bell II (Sr.)
ILB	**88**	**Jamal Ligon (Jr.)**	25	Avery Morris (Jr.)
ILB	**15**	**Trevor Harmanson (Sr.)**	55	Dru Prox (Sr.)
OLB	32	Dadrian Taylor (Sr.)	12	Donyai Taylor (Jr.)
CB	**26**	**Corey Mayfield Jr. (Sr.)**	23	Xavier Spencer (Jr.)
CB	21	Ken Robinson (Jr.)	14	Dywan Griffin (Jr.)
SS	**39**	**Rashad Wisdom (Sr.)**	22	Ryan Shockency (Sr.)
FS	11	Kelechi Nwachuku (Sr.)	10	Clifford Chattman (Sr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	42	Jared Sackett (Sr.)	**KR**	32	Dadrian Taylor (Sr.)
P	35	Lucas Dean (Sr.)	**PR**	12	Joshua Cephus (Sr.)

WKU HILLTOPPERS

National Forecast: 87 • C-USA Prediction: 3 • Projected Record: 7-6, 3-5 C-USA

2022 SCHEDULE

Aug. 27	Austin Peay
Sept. 3	at Hawaii
Sept. 17	at Indiana
Sept. 24	FIU
Oct. 1	Troy
Oct. 8	at UTSA
Oct. 15	at Middle Tennessee
Oct. 22	UAB
Oct. 29	North Texas
Nov. 5	at Charlotte
Nov. 12	Rice
Nov. 19	at Auburn
Nov. 26	at Florida Atlantic

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 9-5, 7-1 C-USA

Sept. 2	Tennessee-Martin	W	59-21
Sept. 11	at Army	L	35-38
Sept. 25	Indiana	L	31-33
Oct. 2	at Michigan State	L	31-48
Oct. 9	UTSA	L	46-52
Oct. 16	at Old Dominion	W	43-20
Oct. 23	at FIU	W	34-19
Oct. 30	Charlotte	W	45-13
Nov. 6	Middle Tennessee	W	48-21
Nov. 13	at Rice	W	42-21
Nov. 20	Florida Atlantic	W	52-17
Nov. 27	at Marshall	W	53-21
Dec. 3	at UTSA #	L	41-49
Dec. 18	vs. App. State %	W	59-38

#C-USA Championship %Boca Raton Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	CUSA	NATIONAL
Scoring	44.2 ppg	1	2
Rushing	101.6 ypg	14	121
Passing	433.7 ypg	1	1
Total	535.3 ypg	1	2

DEFENSE	PER GAME	CUSA	NATIONAL
Scoring	29.4 ppg	10	92
Rushing	167.7 ypg	11	90
Passing	268.1 ypg	13	118
Total	435.8 ypg	12	109

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	CUSA	NATIONAL
+11	+0.79	3	12

STAT CORNER

85

The WKU offense led the nation in explosiveness with 85 plays of 20-plus yards.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Chance McDonald, 5-1-13-1, 0 TDs
Rushing: Kye Robichaux, 67 att., 332 yds., 3 TDs
Receiving: Malachi Corley, 73 rec., 691 yds., 7 TDs
Tackles: Jaden Hunter, 66
Sacks: Will Ignont, Juwuan Jones, 3.5
Interceptions: Two players tied with 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Tyson Helton
Record at School: 23-16 (3 years)
Career Record: 23-16 (3 years)
Offensive Coordinators: Ben Arbuckle, Josh Crawford, Zach Lankford
Defensive Coordinator: Tyson Summers
Location: Bowling Green, KY
Stadium: Houchens Industries-L.T. Smith Stadium (23,776)

OFFENSE WKU's offense erupted last season under offensive coordinator Zach Kittley and quarterback Bailey Zappe, who threw for an FBS-record 62 touchdowns and 5,967 yards. Both are now gone, as are several other key players, and the Tops will look to reload under a new offensive staff. WKU will have three co-offensive coordinators with Ben Arbuckle, Josh Crawford and Zach Lankford, who coach quarterbacks, receivers and offensive linemen, respectively. Arbuckle — Kittley's right-hand man in 2021 and before that at FCS Houston Baptist — will handle play-calling duties.

Replacing Zappe will likely be West Virginia transfer Jarret Doege, but WKU also brought in Austin Reed, who won a Division II national title with West Florida, and signed local standout Caden Veltkamp.

WKU returns weapons in Daewood Davis, Malachi Corley and Dalvin Smith and also brought in MAC transfers Michael Mathison and Jaylen Hall. Tight end Joshua Simon is also expected to return from a knee injury sustained in last year's opener.

WKU lost three starters along the offensive line but returns center Rusty Staats and left guard Quantavious Leslie. The Toppers have high hopes for Gunner Britton and Mark Goode to step up at the tackle positions.

DEFENSE WKU enters its third straight season with a new defensive coordinator — this year, it's Tyson Summers. The Hilltoppers struggled defensively for parts of last season but were strong in league play and allowed no more than 21 points during a seven-game winning streak to claim the East Division title. WKU loses longtime starters in two-time C-USA Defensive Player of the Year DeAngelo Malone, Jeremy Darvin and Antwon Kincade but returns veteran players along the line in Juwuan Jones and Darius Shipp and at the linebacker position with Will Ignont and Jaden Hunter. A.J. Brathwaite Jr. is also back to anchor the secondary.

Summers' new style will give some returnees a chance to shine, like linebackers Niko Cooper and JaQues "Donut" Evans. Expectations are high for some transfers in their second year, like Brodric Martin and Mike Allen on the line and Kaleb Oliver and Kahlef Hailassie in the secondary, to step into bigger roles.

SPECIALISTS Brayden Narveson underwent surgery in the offseason but is expected to return and handle placekicking duties after going 23-of-29 on field goals and 72-for-72 on PATs. There's a question at punter with John Haggerty gone. WKU returns Wes Pahl and brought in Tom Ellard from Melbourne, Australia.

FINAL ANALYSIS WKU's reliance on the transfer portal paid off last year, and the Hilltoppers are hoping that'll be the case again. While the offense likely won't be as potent, WKU returns plenty of weapons and has a veteran QB leading the way. If WKU can shore up its defense vs. quality opponents, it should be able to compete for one of the top spots in C-USA.

DAEWOOD DAVIS

Aaron Gilbert/Icon Sportswire via Getty Images

> "All the questions we had about this program are back. What are they going to look like this year? What's the long-term plan?"
>
> —An opposing C-USA assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Caden Veltkamp, QB, Bowling Green, KY	★★★
2	Darius Thomas, S, Hollywood, FL	★★★
3	KD Hutchinson, ATH, Hamilton, GA	★★★
4	LT Sanders, RB, Gardendale, AL	★★★
5	Quinton Henry, WR, Kenosha, WI	★★★
6	Keaton Law, Edge, Saraland, AL	★★★
7	Evan Wibberley, OT, Ft. Mitchell, KY	★★★
8	Alexander Ford, CB, Nashville, TN	★★★
9	Anthony Breckenridge, LB, Jacksonville, FL	★★★
10	Tom Ellard, P, Melbourne, Aus	★★★

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

WR	17	Dalvin Smith (So.)	0	Jaylen Hall (Sr.)
WR	7	**Daewood Davis (Sr.)**	11	Malachi Corley (So.)
WR	4	Michael Mathison (Jr.)	9	Josh Sterns (So.)
LT	76	Mark Goode (So.)	52	Marshall Jackson (Fr.)
LG	78	**Quantavious Leslie (So.)**	50	Wesley Horton (Fr.)
C	53	**Rusty Staats (Jr.)**	79	Cameron Stage (Jr.)
RG	64	Vinnie Murphy (So.)	58	Evan Wibberley (Fr.)
RT	75	Gunner Britton (Jr.)	73	Wes Dorsey (So.)
TE	6	**Joshua Simon (So.)**	89	**Joey Beljan (Jr.)**
QB	2	Jarret Doege (Sr.)	16	Austin Reed (Sr.)
RB	3	Jakairi Moses (Jr.)	8	Kye Robichaux (So.)

DEFENSE (6)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	34	**Juwuan Jones (Sr.)**	98	Marcus Bragg (Sr.)
DT	97	**Darius Shipp (Sr.)**	92	Terrion Thompson (So.)
DT	99	Brodric Martin (Sr.)	35	Mike Allen (Sr.)
OLB	3	JaQues Evans (So.)	32	Kylan Guidry (So.)
ILB	1	**Jaden Hunter (Sr.)**	36	Christian Gomez (Sr.)
ILB	23	**Will Ignont (Sr.)**	8	Matthew Flint (Jr.)
OLB	4	Niko Cooper (Jr.)	41	Aaron Key (Fr.)
CB	12	**Kahlef Hailassie (Jr.)**	7	Tre Shaw (Sr.)
CB	21	Upton Stout (Fr.)	14	Davion Williams (Jr.)
S	2	**A.J. Brathwaite Jr. (Jr.)**	20	Kaleb Oliver (Sr.)
S	5	Rome Weber (Jr.)	16	Kendrick Simpkins (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	44	Brayden Narveson (Jr.)	KR	9	Josh Sterns (So.)
P	47	Tom Ellard (Jr.)	PR	9	Josh Sterns (So.)

ARMY BLACK KNIGHTS

National Forecast: 70 • Projected Record: 8-4

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	at Coastal Carolina
Sept. 10	UTSA
Sept. 17	Villanova
Oct. 1	Georgia State
Oct. 8	at Wake Forest
Oct. 15	Colgate
Oct. 22	ULM
Nov. 5	vs. Air Force #
Nov. 12	at Troy
Nov. 19	UConn
Nov. 26	at UMass
Dec. 10	vs. Navy %

#Arlington, TX %Philadelphia

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 9-4

Sept. 4	at Georgia State	W	43-10
Sept. 11	WKU	W	38-35
Sept. 18	UConn	W	52-21
Sept. 25	Miami (Ohio)	W	23-10
Oct. 2	at Ball State	L	16-28
Oct. 16	at Wisconsin	L	14-20
Oct. 23	Wake Forest	L	56-70
Nov. 6	vs. Air Force # (ot)	W	21-14
Nov. 13	Bucknell	W	63-10
Nov. 20	UMass	W	33-17
Nov. 27	at Liberty	W	31-16
Dec. 11	vs. Navy %	L	13-17
Dec. 22	vs. Missouri &	W	24-22

#Arlington %East Rutherford &Armed Forces Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	NATIONAL
Scoring	32.8 ppg	32
Rushing	280.6 ypg	2
Passing	94.8 ypg	129
Total	375.5 ypg	83

DEFENSE	PER GAME	NATIONAL
Scoring	22.3 ppg	33
Rushing	117.2 ypg	16
Passing	211.2 ypg	38
Total	328.4 ypg	15

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	NATIONAL
+8	+0.62	19

STAT CORNER

0.260

Army rushed 31.7% more than the average team but leveraged its passing game ruthlessly, ranking seventh in EPA/pass at 0.260.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Jemel Jones, 13-7-135-1, 1 TD
Rushing: Tyrell Robinson, 72 att., 609 yds., 3 TDs
Receiving: Isaiah Alston, 22 rec., 449 yds., 3 TDs
Tackles: Marquel Broughton, 80
Sacks: Andre Carter II, 15.5
Interceptions: Three players tied with 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Jeff Monken
Record at School: 58-43 (8 years)
Career Record: 96-59 (12 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Brent Davis
Defensive Coordinator: Nate Woody
Location: West Point, NY
Stadium: Michie Stadium (38,000)

OFFENSE Though quarterback and leading rusher Christian Anderson graduated, the Black Knights return their next five leading rushers from a ground attack that averaged 281 yards per game to rank second nationally. Slotback Tyrell Robinson (609 yards) and fullback Jakobi Buchanan (504 yards, 12 TDs) should keep the chains moving once again.

Senior Tyhier Tyler is ready to take over at quarterback for Anderson after starting four games each of the past two seasons. The primary backup is senior Jemel Jones, who has seen action each of the past three seasons. Junior Cade Ballard, who has battled injuries during his career and who head coach Jeff Monken says is a "great leader," will vie for snaps. Receiver Isaiah Alston withdrew his name from the portal, so the rangy (6'4") target returns after averaging 20.4 yards per catch. Joshua Lingenfelter started several games at tight end last season.

The Black Knights must replace a couple of starters on the line and build depth. The unit, which is a work in progress that will continue into fall camp, is anchored by center Connor Bishop. The senior was slowed by injuries last season and was limited during the spring, but Monken expects him to have a "huge impact" in 2022. Jordyn Law emerged as a solid left tackle last season.

DEFENSE Arik Smith and Andre Carter II were a terrorizing duo at linebacker last season while combining for 27.5 tackles for a loss. Smith is gone, so the centerpiece of a unit that ranked 15th nationally in total defense is the 6'7" Carter, who piled up 15.5 sacks, good for second nationally to Alabama's Will Anderson Jr. Carter, who earned third-team All-America honors, also forced four fumbles. Not only does Smith need to be replaced, but two other linebackers do as well. It represents an opportunity for younger players such as Tyler Rafferty.

Senior safety Marquel Broughton, the Black Knights' leading returning tackler (80) from a year ago, is the leader of a largely veteran secondary. Junior corner Jabari Moore broke up a team-high seven passes last season. Up front, a pair of starting tackles return in senior Kwabena Bonsu and junior Chris Frey.

SPECIALISTS Robinson was a special teams threat last season, averaging 12.8 yards on 11 punt returns. Cole Talley took over the placekicking and was 8-for-11 on field goals, including drilling 7-of-8 from inside 40. Junior Billy Boehlke is among those seeking to take over the punting chores for Zach Harding, who averaged 44.1 yards per punt last season.

FINAL ANALYSIS Now in his ninth season in West Point, Monken has led the Black Knights to at least nine wins in four of the past five seasons. To maintain that pace, Army needs the offensive line to jell and for a couple of new linebackers to step up. Though there is a tough season opener at Coastal Carolina, the schedule is very manageable. Even with a few question marks in key spots, the Black Knights should go bowling for a fifth time in six seasons.

ANDRE CARTER II

Matthew Pearce/Icon Sportswire via Getty Images

> "The toughest of the academies for sure, and they embrace that culture. I think they need to expand their offense just a little, and they could be even better."
>
> —An opposing assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Bridger Knee, DL, Chattanooga, TN	★★★
2	Connor Clinton, S, Queen Creek, AZ	★★
3	James Maloney, OT, Watertown, CT	n/r
4	Garrett McGriff, CB, Carmichael, CA	n/r
5	Esteban Guillory, S, San Antonio, TX	n/r
6	Mason Davis, DL, Denton, TX	n/r
7	Michael Davis, WR, Denton, TX	n/r
8	RJ De Madet, CB, Frisco, TX	n/r
9	Samari Howard, RB, Temple, TX	n/r
10	Sam Dec, OT, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL	n/r

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

WR	86	Isaiah Alston (So.)	29	Cole Caterbone (Sr.)
LT	**77**	**Jordyn Law (So.)**	74	Simon Dellinger (Jr.)
LG	72	Aidan Gaines (Jr.)	62	Sam Barczak (Jr.)
C	**57**	**Connor Bishop (Sr.)**	68	Jackson Filipowicz (Jr.)
RG	**60**	**Connor Finucane (Jr.)**	73	Dayton Baugh (Jr.)
RT	78	Shayne Buckingham (Jr.)	75	David Hayward (Jr.)
TE	**88**	**Joshua Lingenfelter (Jr.)**	47	Blane Cleaver (So.)
QB	2	Tyhier Tyler (Sr.)	7	Jemel Jones (Sr.)
RB	**21**	**Tyrell Robinson (Jr.)**	16	Bryson Daily (So.)
RB	8	Braheam Murphy (Sr.)	9	Maurice Bellan (Sr.)
FB	33	Jakobi Buchanan (Jr.)	32	Tyson Riley (Jr.)

DEFENSE (6)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DT	**97**	**Kwabena Bonsu (Sr.)**	93	Tyler Komorowski (Sr.)
NT	96	Darius Richardson (Sr.)	52	Austin Hill (Jr.)
DT	**99**	**Chris Frey (Jr.)**	89	Kyle Lewis (So.)
OLB	**34**	**Andre Carter II (Jr.)**	44	Nathaniel Smith (Jr.)
ILB	38	Fabrice Voyne (Sr.)	31	Leo Lowin (Jr.)
ILB	**45**	**Spencer Jones (Jr.)**	39	Tyler Rafferty (So.)
OLB	30	Daryan McDonald (Sr.)	7	Jimmy Ciarlo (Jr.)
CB	**4**	**Jabari Moore (Jr.)**	13	Bo Nicolas-Paul (Jr.)
CB	10	Cameron Jones (Jr.)	17	Isaiah Morris (Sr.)
SS	**20**	**Marquel Broughton (Sr.)**	37	Max DiDomenico (So.)
FS	26	Quindrelin Hammonds (Jr.)	1	Daelan Smith (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	94	Cole Talley (Jr.)	KR	21	Tyrell Robinson (Jr.)
P	90	Billy Boehlke (Jr.)	PR	21	Tyrell Robinson (Jr.)

BYU COUGARS

National Forecast: 27 • Projected Record: 8-4

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Kalani Sitake
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 48-29 (6 years)
CAREER RECORD: 48-29 (6 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Aaron Roderick
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Ilaisa Tuiaki
LOCATION: Provo, UT
STADIUM: LaVell Edwards Stadium (63,470)

KEY COUGARS

JAREN HALL, QB The first African American starting quarterback in BYU history, Hall won the job last August and started in 10 games, winning eight of them.

PUKA NACUA, WR Washington transfer led the Cougars in receiving yards, catching 43 passes for 805 yards and six touchdowns in 2021.

CHRISTOPHER BROOKS, RB Cal transfer was recruited to fill the shoes of RB Tyler Allgeier and immediately impressed in spring camp.

KEY LOSSES

TYLER ALLGEIER, RB Set a school single-season rushing record with 1,601 yards (5.8 per attempt) and 23 TDs in 2021.

JAMES EMPEY, C Four-year starter was plagued by foot and ankle injuries his senior season but still started in six games and helped the Cougars average 452 yards and 33 points in 2021.

URIAH LEIATAUA, DE Played in all 13 games, recording a career-best 26 tackles and four sacks.

RISING STAR

The son of former Texas Tech star Lloyd Hill and nephew of Cowboys great Roy Williams, **KEANU HILL** was BYU's fourth-leading receiver as a freshman with 343 yards and two TDs on 18 catches. He is expected to replace Neil Pau'u as BYU's WR3.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Cody Hagen, WR, Draper, UT	★★★★
2	Aisea Moa, DL, Ogden, UT	★★★★
3	Dominique McKenzie, WR, St. George, UT	★★★
4	Marcus McKenzie, ATH, St. George, UT	★★★
5	Noah Moeaki, LB, American Fork, UT	★★★
6	Lisala Tai, OT, Hawthorne, CA*	★★★
7	Jarinn Kalama, ATH, Heber City, UT	★★★
8	Micah Wilson, LB, Draper, UT	★★★
9	Talin Togiai, DL, Rigby, ID	★★★
10	Peter Falaniko, OL, St. George, UT	★★★
11	Zoom Esplin, OT, Encinitas, CA	★★★
12	Vae Soifua, OL, Orem, UT	★★★
13	Cannon DeVries, ATH, Ogden, UT	★★★
14	Korbyn Green, CB, Owasso, OK	★★★
15	Zion Allen, CB, Manteca, CA	★★★
16	Maika Kaufusi, S, Sandy, UT	★★★
17	Trevin Ostler, ATH, Bountiful, UT	★★★
18	Liutai Kinikini, LB, Salt Lake City, UT	★★★
19	Brooks Jones, ATH, Queen Creek, AZ	★★★
20	Kaden Chidester, TE, Richfield, UT	★★★
21	Parker Kingston, ATH, Roy, UT	★★★
22	Cooper Ross, TE, Mesa, AZ	★★★
23	Evan Johnson, WR, Pebble Beach, CA	n/r
24	Nathaniel Gillis, ATH, Spring Valley, CA	n/r

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite *junior college transfer

Having lost No. 2 overall pick Zach Wilson and four other stalwarts to the NFL Draft after the 2020 season, and facing seven teams from Power 5 conferences, the BYU Cougars were supposed to be in rebuilding mode in 2021. Guess again.

The Cougars defeated six of those P5 programs; went 5–0 against the Pac-12, including a convincing 26–17 win over Rose Bowl participant and rival Utah; and put together another outstanding season marred only by a 31–28 upset loss to UAB in the Independence Bowl. The Cougars have gone 21–4 the past two seasons.

So what will 2022 be like? For one thing, it will be BYU's last as a college football independent. The Cougars will join the Big 12 in 2023.

Unlike in 2021, however, the Cougars are not rebuilding. They return 18 of 22 starters and are replacing only four key contributors — running back Tyler Allgeier, receiver Neil Pau'u, center James Empey and defensive end Uriah Leiataua.

Expectations are high for the Cougars, if they can stay healthy. Mid- and late-season injuries last year derailed a special year, one that seemed headed toward another 11- or 12-win campaign until stars such as linebackers Keenan Pili and Payton Wilgar, Empey, Pau'u and even quarterback Jaren Hall were unable to finish.

"These guys love each other," head coach Kalani Sitake said when the Cougars wrapped up spring practices on March 31. "They are not happy with how the season ended, and you saw it in the way that they approached the offseason."

OFFENSE History has proven that whenever BYU has a senior quarterback, the Cougars have thrived on offense, so that portends good things in 2022. Technically, Hall is listed as a junior on BYU's roster, but this will be his fifth season in Provo, and he's hinted that it will be his last. By all accounts, Hall was in complete control of the offense in spring camp, and he added some arm strength to his repertoire through offseason workouts with former BYU QB John Beck and others.

Days after Allgeier declared for the NFL Draft, Sitake and offensive coordinator Aaron Roderick were able to lure Cal transfer RB Christopher Brooks away from the likes of Purdue and Notre Dame. Brooks was easily BYU's biggest offseason addition and could make the kind of impact that Washington transfer receiver Puka Nacua did in 2021, coaches say.

The offensive line should be a strength. Offensive line coach Darrell Funk can go nine or 10 deep there.

Nacua and fifth-year senior Gunner Romney form a solid one-two punch at the receiver spots. The Cougars finished spring camp with Keanu Hill, Chase Roberts, Brayden Cosper and Kody Epps competing to be WR3.

DEFENSE BYU's defense was solid to start the 2021 season, contributing to the Cougars' big wins over Arizona State, Utah and Washington State. But injuries eventually took their toll, and the Cougars struggled to stop the run in losses to Boise State and Baylor and wins over Virginia and USC.

JAREN HALL

BYU Athletics

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	at USF
Sept. 10	Baylor
Sept. 17	at Oregon
Sept. 24	Wyoming
Sept. 29	Utah State
Oct. 8	vs. Notre Dame #
Oct. 15	Arkansas
Oct. 22	at Liberty
Oct. 28	East Carolina
Nov. 5	at Boise State
Nov. 19	Utah Tech
Nov. 26	at Stanford

#Las Vegas

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 10-3

Sept. 4	vs. Arizona #	W	24-16
Sept. 11	Utah	W	26-17
Sept. 18	Arizona State	W	27-17
Sept. 25	USF	W	35-27
Oct. 1	at Utah State	W	34-20
Oct. 9	Boise State	L	17-26
Oct. 16	at Baylor	L	24-38
Oct. 23	at Washington State	W	21-19
Oct. 30	Virginia	W	66-49
Nov. 6	Idaho State	W	59-14
Nov. 20	at Georgia Southern	W	34-17
Nov. 27	at USC	W	35-31
Dec. 18	vs. UAB %	L	28-31

#Las Vegas %Independence Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	NATIONAL
Scoring	33.1 ppg	29
Rushing	188.5 ypg	37
Passing	264.1 ypg	31
Total	452.6 ypg	17
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	24.7 ppg	51
Rushing	156.3 ypg	71
Passing	231.9 ypg	72
Total	388.2 ypg	74
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**NATIONAL**
+11	+0.85	7

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		Rank
Offense	27.5	100
Defense	26.2	10
Margin	+1.3	46

Efficiency[2]		Rank
Offense	50.5%	6
Defense	47.1%	114
Margin	+3.4%	51

Explosiveness[3]		Rank
Offense	6.9	7
Defense	5.8	80
Margin	+1.1	22

Finishing Drives[4]		Rank
Offense	4.4	42
Defense	4.3	86
Margin	+0.1	74

Adjusted TO Margin[5]		Rank
Projected	0.4	63
Actual	8	19
Margin	+7.6	9

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

49.3%

BYU's rushing game ranked second in the FBS with a 49.3 percent rushing success rate. The Cougars ranked 14th nationally in rushing efficiency, averaging 0.155 EPA/rush.

45.9%

The Cougars ranked 15th nationally in offensive third-down conversion percentage, picking up the first down 45.9 percent of the time (72 of 157).

106

Conversely, the Cougars' defense struggled to get off the field on third down, ranking 106th nationally in third-down conversion defense at 43.0 percent.

Stopping the run is a big emphasis for defensive coordinator Ilaisa Tuiaki's group in 2022, even as the Cougars try various defensive fronts in a never-ending effort to get more pressure on opposing quarterbacks. Developing depth is another point of emphasis, so injuries to top-line players don't have as much of an impact as they did in 2021.

"It seems like the same thing every year — our concerns are keeping them healthy, mostly," Tuiaki says. "If we can stay healthy, and the ball bounces the right way, we have a chance to have a pretty special year."

If the aforementioned Pili and Wilgar return at full health, linebacker will be the unit's strength.

Defensive end Tyler Batty returns for a front looking to be more disruptive, while three-year starting free safety Malik Moore anchors a secondary that has plenty of experience at cornerback but is looking for someone to step up at the strong safety spot. The candidates there are converted cornerback Micah Harper and Hayden Livingston, among others.

The best addition on defense is Vanderbilt transfer corner Gabe Jeudy-Lally, who brings SEC experience.

SPECIALISTS Punter Ryan Rehkow and kicker Jake Oldroyd combine to give BYU one of the best specialist tandems in the country. The three-year starters should vie for postseason honors, if they get enough attempts to qualify. Oldroyd was 9-of-13 on field-goal attempts in 2021, while Rehkow averaged 48.6 yards per punt on 40 attempts. Punt returner Hobbs Nyberg and primary kick returners Caleb Christensen and Lopini Katoa are also back.

FINAL ANALYSIS The Cougars will score a lot of points in 2022 because their offense was explosive in 2021 and has almost every key ingredient is back. If BYU can develop a stingier defense and find some playmakers on that side of the ball, watch out. The Cougars' final season of independence could be memorable.

However, if the defense struggles to get off the field like it did in 2021, problems could follow. Certainly, several teams provided a blueprint last year on how to beat the Cougars. Their prolific offense can't score from the sidelines as 10-, 11- and 12-play drives from opponents become the norm.

Oregon, Baylor, Notre Dame and Arkansas will provide tough tests, as will road games at Boise State, Stanford and Liberty. If the Cougars put together a third straight 10-win season, they will have earned it.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)

WR	**18**	**Gunner Romney (Sr.)**	20	Brayden Cosper (Jr.)
WR	**12**	**Puka Nacua (Jr.)**	27	Chase Roberts (Fr.)
WR	1	Keanu Hill (So.)	0	Kody Epps (Fr.)
LT	**71**	**Blake Freeland (Jr.)**	64	Brayden Keim (So.)
LG	**74**	**Clark Barrington (Jr.)**	61	Keanu Saleapaga (Sr.)
C	**70**	**Connor Pay (So.)**	**52**	**Joe Tukuafu (Sr.)**
RG	74	Campbell Barrington (So.)	69	Seth Willis (So.)
RT	78	Kingsley Suamataia (Fr.)	76	Harris LaChance (Jr.)
TE	**83**	**Isaac Rex (So.)**	5	Dallin Holker (Jr.)
QB	**3**	**Jaren Hall (Jr.)**	17	Jacob Conover (Fr.)
RB	2	Christopher Brooks (Sr.)	4	Lopini Katoa (Sr.)

DEFENSE (10)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	**92**	**Tyler Batty (So.)**	93	Blake Mangelson (So.)
NT	95	Caden Haws (So.)	62	Atunaisa Mahe (Jr.)
DT	55	Lorenzo Fauatea (Sr.)	**91**	**Earl Tuioti-Mariner (Sr.)**
DE	**98**	**Gabe Summers (Jr.)**	94	John Nelson (So.)
OLB	**34**	**Payton Wilgar (Jr.)**	**45**	**Pepe Tanuvasa (Sr.)**
MLB	**41**	**Keenan Pili (Jr.)**	34	Josh Wilson (So.)
OLB	**33**	**Ben Bywater (So.)**	31	Max Tooley (Jr.)
CB	**5**	**D'Angelo Mandell (Sr.)**		Gabe Jeudy-Lally (So.)
CB	**18**	**Kaleb Hayes (Sr.)**	11	Isaiah Herron (Jr.)
SS	28	Hayden Livingston (Jr.)	22	Ammon Hannemann (So.)
FS	**12**	**Malik Moore (Sr.)**	1	Micah Harper (Fr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	39	Jake Oldroyd (Jr.)	**KR**	4	Caleb Christensen (So.)
P	24	Ryan Rehkow (So.)	**PR**	23	Hobbs Nyberg (So.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Jaren Hall	**296**	**189**	**2,583**	**20**	**5**
Baylor Romney	**80**	**56**	**779**	**6**	**0**
Jacob Conover	**10**	**5**	**45**	**0**	**0**
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Tyler Allgeier	276	1,601	5.8	23	
Jaren Hall	**62**	**307**	**5.0**	**3**	
Lopini Katoa	**61**	**242**	**4.0**	**2**	
Puka Nacua	**14**	**148**	**10.6**	**0**	
Jackson McChesney	**14**	**64**	**4.6**	**1**	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Neil Pau'u	46	526	11.4	6	
Puka Nacua	**43**	**805**	**18.7**	**6**	
Gunner Romney	**34**	**594**	**17.5**	**3**	
Tyler Allgeier	28	199	7.1	0	
Samson Nacua	21	329	15.7	3	

KICKING: **Jake Oldroyd, 9-13 FGs, 69 pts.**
TACKLES: **Ben Bywater, 102; Max Tooley, 68**
SACKS: **Tyler Batty, 3.5**
INTERCEPTIONS: **Malik Moore, 3; Jakob Robinson, 3**

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE COUGARS

Opposing Coaches Size Up BYU

"Kalani [Sitake] has changed the identity of this program. If they didn't get the Big 12 invite, it's possible he could've gone and found a Power 5 job after last season. The biggest criticism is that their success was riding the hot hand [Zach Wilson], but they came back and looked great last season, too. … They're investing in the program in ways they've needed to for a long, long time. It looks like the administration knows they have a really great staff and head coach, and they want it to look Power 5 for the first time. It's way overdue. … They've got one year left as an independent, and when they have that schedule, you notice them drift week to week. They play to the level of their competition, which is good and bad. … The quarterback is another legit guy, fits their system, makes smart throws, but I think they're going to have to push him a little bit because they're missing the back [Tyler Allgeier], and it's gonna hurt at first. … One thing to watch for in the long term is how they recruit and develop their lines and their team speed. They play Power 5 [teams] every year, but most of this roster will carry over to the Big 12. So you need better, physical line play. They used to have a reputation for much nastier linemen, honestly. So that team speed will be important because they need to get ready to come into a league where everyone's just as big or bigger, and probably faster."

NOTRE DAME FIGHTING IRISH

National Forecast: 7 • Projected Record: 9-3

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Marcus Freeman
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 0-1
CAREER RECORD: 0-1
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tommy Rees
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Al Golden
LOCATION: Notre Dame, IN
STADIUM: Notre Dame Stadium (77,622)

KEY FIGHTING IRISH

MICHAEL MAYER, TE A chiseled block of granite with great hands and a gritty, physical nature. Looks and plays the part of the No. 1 tight end off the draft board in 2023.

ISAIAH FOSKEY, DE One of the nation's more highly touted pass rushers is returning after considering a jump to the NFL.

JAYSON ADEMILOLA, DT Virtually unknown on the national level, the twin brother of productive Irish defensive end Justin has a non-stop motor and sideline-to-sideline range.

KEY LOSSES

KYLE HAMILTON, S He missed half the games with a knee injury after setting the standard for safety play with his condor-like range. Had eight career interceptions in 19 starts.

KYREN WILLIAMS, RB The heartbeat of the Irish offense in 2020-21. Williams willed Notre Dame to victory with his elusive, game-breaking ability and team-leading motivation.

JACK COAN, QB Immobile, to be sure, but a steadying, level-headed influence with an accurate arm during the seven-game winning streak to end the regular season.

RISING STAR

Dormant at wideout for a season-plus, **XAVIER WATTS** shifted to safety in the second half of 2021. His game is earmarked by physicality and the accompanying sound of popping pads. He likely starts the season as the No. 2 in a two-man strong safety rotation, but his emergence is imminent.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Jaylen Sneed, LB, Hilton Head Island, SC	★★★★★
2	Joshua Burnham, LB, Traverse City, MI	★★★★
3	Aamil Wagner, OT, Dayton, OH	★★★★
4	Tyson Ford, DL, St. Louis, MO	★★★★
5	Tobias Merriweather, WR, Camas, WA	★★★★
6	Billy Schrauth, OL, Fond du Lac, WI	★★★★
7	Joey Tanona, OT, Zionsville, IN	★★★★
8	Junior Tuihalamaka, LB, Mission Hills, CA	★★★★
9	Aiden Gobaira, Edge, Chantilly, VA	★★★★
10	Eli Raridon, TE, West Des Moines, IA	★★★★
11	Jadarian Price, RB, Denison, TX	★★★★
12	Jaden Mickey, CB, Corona, CA	★★★★
13	Ty Chan, OT, Groton, MA	★★★★
14	Gi'Bran Payne, RB, Cincinnati, OH	★★★★
15	Holden Staes, TE, Atlanta, GA	★★★★
16	Nolan Ziegler, LB, Grand Rapids, MI	★★★★
17	Steve Angeli, QB, Oradell, NJ	★★★★
18	Benjamin Morrison, CB, Phoenix, AZ	★★★★
19	Jayden Bellamy, CB, Oradell, NJ	★★★
20	Donovan Hinish, DL, Pittsburgh, PA	★★★
21	Ashton Craig, OT, Lawrenceburg, IN	★★★
22	Bryce McFerson, P, Indian Trail, NC	★★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite

The viral video that made the rounds when Marcus Freeman was introduced to his team as their new head coach characterized how his players felt about the decision by the university brass. The rowdy reception for their new head coach and collective team embrace spoke volumes.

It was a decision universally embraced by Notre Dame fans, particularly those who had grown impatient with Brian Kelly's 54 victories in five seasons yet hollow results against most upper-echelon opponents over his 12-year tenure.

Eleven victories per season for half a decade is a hard act to follow for the 36-year-old first-time head coach, as evidenced by Notre Dame's blown 21-point lead in Freeman's debut as the head man in the Fiesta Bowl against Oklahoma State.

Yet Irish fans were ready for a change from Kelly, who surpassed Knute Rockne as the winningest coach in Notre Dame history but couldn't scale the higher elevations. Notre Dame lost in a national championship game by 28 points, two first-round playoff games by 27 and 17 and an ACC Championship Game by 24, and it failed to win a major bowl.

In Freeman, the Irish have a relentless recruiter with a full understanding of Notre Dame's expectations and standards. "We will be disciplined, we will be tough, we will work tirelessly," Freeman says. "As a team and as a family, we'll accomplish all of our goals. I plan on leading this team with an unwavering standard. We will call it the golden standard.

"We're going to out-work everybody in the country. We're going to do things that no one else has done. We want to be unique in how we develop relationships."

OFFENSE Third-year offensive coordinator Tommy Rees inherits his third starting quarterback in as many seasons after working with Ian Book and Wisconsin grad transfer Jack Coan, both of whom provided ample experience.

Sophomore Tyler Buchner and redshirt sophomore Drew Pyne played in 2021 with varying degrees of success in relief of Coan. Now one — or both — will be in a lead role, with Buchner offering a run-pass option.

The strength of the offense is the line, after an abysmal start to '21 but a strong finish. Jarrett Patterson is one of the nation's top centers, with sophomore left tackle Joe Alt and redshirt freshman right tackle Blake Fisher flashing future first-round ability.

The line will block for an exciting group of running backs, even with the loss of two-time 1,000-yard rusher Kyren Williams. Speedy Chris Tyree and up-and-comer Logan Diggs lead the way.

The concern is difference-making ability in the pass-catching corps beyond Michael Mayer, who likely will be the first tight end off the board on NFL draft day 2023.

"I don't believe anyone in the country can cover me one-on-one," Mayer says.

Wideout Braden Lenzy has much to prove after four years of inconsistency, while Avery Davis is coming off a torn ACL. The star-in-the-making is sophomore Lorenzo Styles. But the Irish lack a proven wideout with size.

MICHAEL MAYER

Peter Brouillet

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	at Ohio State
Sept. 10	Marshall
Sept. 17	California
Sept. 24	at North Carolina
Oct. 8	vs. BYU #
Oct. 15	Stanford
Oct. 22	UNLV
Oct. 29	at Syracuse
Nov. 5	Clemson
Nov. 12	vs. Navy %
Nov. 19	Boston College
Nov. 26	at USC

#Las Vegas %Baltimore

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 11-2

Sept. 5	at Florida State (ot)	W	41-38
Sept. 11	Toledo	W	32-29
Sept. 18	Purdue	W	27-13
Sept. 25	vs. Wisconsin #	W	41-13
Oct. 2	Cincinnati	L	13-24
Oct. 9	at Virginia Tech	W	32-29
Oct. 23	USC	W	31-16
Oct. 30	North Carolina	W	44-34
Nov. 6	Navy	W	34-6
Nov. 13	at Virginia	W	28-3
Nov. 20	Georgia Tech	W	55-0
Nov. 27	at Stanford	W	45-14
Jan. 1	vs. Oklahoma State %	L	35-37

#Chicago %Fiesta Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	NATIONAL
Scoring	35.2 ppg	19
Rushing	143.8 ypg	83
Passing	282.5 ypg	20
Total	426.2 ypg	45
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	19.7 ppg	15
Rushing	135.3 ypg	37
Passing	224.2 ypg	64
Total	359.5 ypg	43
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**NATIONAL**
+9	+0.69	15

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	29.2	59
Defense	28.9	67
Margin	+0.3	61
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	42.8%	69
Defense	39.0%	30
Margin	+3.8%	42
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	6.2	46
Defense	5.3	33
Margin	+0.9	33
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.9	10
Defense	3.3	13
Margin	+1.6	3
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	4.1	12
Actual	9	14
Margin	+4.9	27

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

-0.186

Notre Dame's pass defense ranked fifth nationally in limiting explosiveness, allowing -0.186 EPA/pass. Opponents were successful on 39.1 percent of all passes, ranking Notre Dame's defense 50th nationally in efficiency.

3.63

The Irish defense held opponents to 3.63 points per quality possession, ranking eighth nationally. Opponents generated a quality possession against Notre Dame on 40.6 percent of possessions, 20th-best nationally.

27.2%

The Notre Dame rushing attack ranked 91st in efficiency in 2021, succeeding on just 27.2 percent of rushes.

DEFENSE Notre Dame's third defensive coordinator in three years is former Miami Hurricanes head coach and Cincinnati Bengals assistant Al Golden. Golden offers a wide-ranging background with three- and four-man front experience and is a vital sounding board for Freeman. "I sit in his defensive meetings, just to learn, just to hear him teach," Freeman says. "He's a great motivator. He's super intelligent. Our players will tell you they've learned a lot of ball from him."

The Irish have difference-makers on all three levels. End Isaiah Foskey, an NFL first-round draft candidate, had 11 sacks last season. Tackle Jayson Ademilola was a disruptive force in '21.

The linebacker corps is talented and heady. Marist Liufau, a dynamic athlete, missed last season with a broken leg. Bo Bauer, a special teams standout and emotional sparkplug, moves into the starting lineup. There are larger and more talented athletes than Jack Kiser, but few headier and more consistent. Leading tackler JD Bertrand will be in the mix.

Notre Dame's inability to match up athletically at cornerback was its downfall in Kelly's biggest games. Cam Hart and TaRiq Bracy look primed to excel, but proven depth is a concern.

The safety position has absorbed a significant loss with first-round pick Kyle Hamilton's departure for the NFL. But the Irish added Northwestern All-America safety Brandon Joseph through the transfer portal. Ramon Henderson adds athletic length.

SPECIALISTS The Irish must replace three-year placekicker Jonathan Doerer and three-year punter Jay Bramblett. Grad transfer kicker Blake Grupe was a four-year starter at Arkansas State with redshirt freshman Josh Bryan competing. Harvard grad transfer punter Jon Sot holds the track-record edge over freshman Bryce McFerson. Tyree, who had a 96-yard kick return against Wisconsin, should be one of the nation's top threats.

FINAL ANALYSIS The Irish remain true to their strengths along both lines, which spearheaded two playoff appearances in three years.

The season hinges on a) the consistency of the unproven quarterback(s), b) the development of a big wideout and c) the evolution of Notre Dame's secondary.

The shift from Kelly to Freeman is the great intangible in a season that's more transition in leadership than significant drop in talent/experience.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)				
WR	**0**	**Braden Lenzy (Sr.)**	16	Deion Colzie (So.)
WR	21	Lorenzo Styles (So.)	83	Jayden Thomas (Fr.)
WR	**3**	**Avery Davis (Sr.)**	5	Joe Wilkins Jr. (Sr.)
LT	**76**	**Joe Alt (So.)**	68	Michael Carmody (So.)
LG	**73**	**Andrew Kristofic (So.)**	74	Billy Schrauth (Fr.)
C	**55**	**Jarrett Patterson (Sr.)**	52	Zeke Correll (Jr.)
RG	**75**	**Josh Lugg (Sr.)**	50	Rocco Spindler (Fr.)
RT	54	Blake Fisher (Fr.)	79	Tosh Baker (So.)
TE	**87**	**Michael Mayer (Jr.)**	84	Kevin Bauman (So.)
QB	12	Tyler Buchner (So.)	10	Drew Pyne (So.)
RB	25	Chris Tyree (Jr.)	22	Logan Diggs (So.)
DEFENSE (6)			Returning Starters in **BOLD**	
DE	**7**	**Isaiah Foskey (Jr.)**	9	Justin Ademilola (Sr.)
NT	54	Jacob Lacey (Sr.)		Chris Smith (Sr.)
DT	**57**	**Jayson Ademilola (Sr.)**	56	Howard Cross III (Jr.)
DE	99	Rylie Mills (Jr.)	31	Nana Osafo-Mensah (Jr.)
SLB	**24**	**Jack Kiser (Jr.)**	12	Jordan Botelho (Jr.)
MLB	52	Bo Bauer (Sr.)	**27**	**JD Bertrand (Jr.)**
WLB	8	Marist Liufau (Jr.)	32	Prince Kollie (So.)
CB	**5**	**Cam Hart (Jr.)**	15	Ryan Barnes (Fr.)
CB	28	TaRiq Bracy (Sr.)	**6**	**Clarence Lewis (Jr.)**
SS	11	Ramon Henderson (Jr.)	26	Xavier Watts (So.)
FS	16	Brandon Joseph (Jr.)	2	DJ Brown (Sr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	99	Blake Grupe (Sr.)	**KR**	25	Chris Tyree (Jr.)
P		Jon Sot (Sr.)	**PR**	16	Brandon Joseph (Jr.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	**ATT**	**COMP**	**YDS**	**TD**	**INT**
Jack Coan	386	253	3,150	25	7
Tyler Buchner	**35**	**21**	**298**	**3**	**3**
Drew Pyne	**30**	**15**	**224**	**2**	**0**
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Kyren Williams	204	1,002	4.9	14	
Tyler Buchner	**46**	**358**	**7.3**	**3**	
Logan Diggs	**52**	**239**	**4.4**	**3**	
Chris Tyree	**56**	**232**	**4.0**	**1**	
Braden Lenzy	**5**	**69**	**13.8**	**0**	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Michael Mayer	**71**	**840**	**11.8**	**7**	
Kevin Austin Jr.	48	888	18.5	7	
Kyren Williams	42	359	8.5	3	
Braden Lenzy	**32**	**350**	**10.9**	**3**	
Avery Davis	**27**	**386**	**14.3**	**4**	

KICKING: Jonathan Doerer, 16-21 FGs, 100 pts.
TACKLES: **JD Bertrand, 101;** Drew White, 55
SACKS: **Isaiah Foskey, 11.0**
INTERCEPTIONS: **DJ Brown, 3;** Kyle Hamilton, 3

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE FIGHTING IRISH

Opposing Coaches Size Up Notre Dame

"Let's say there's no drop-off and things are about equal in terms of the game-day execution. If that's the case, the difference between Brian Kelly and Marcus Freeman is going to be recruiting and development. A lot of us really think they're going to recruit better under Marcus. If Marcus can recruit better and maintain the development with the standards there, he's the better coach. This is the nation's best development program by definition, because they can get elite players, they can get tough, big guys, and they can smart guys who are rougher, and put them all together. … They do a really good job on offense. Tommy Rees is smart; he could be a head coach now if he wanted. The QB is more of what they want in that system. They're better when they can run around at that position. The OL is just consistently good. Always a problem for creating pressures. The tight end [Michael Mayer] is the best offensive player on the team, honestly. The [Lorenzo] Styles kid started to really come on at the end, too. … Last year, Marcus ran a little of Clark Lea's stuff and a little of his. Now it's all his guys, so I think you're gonna see more hybrid 3-4 and less of the 3-3 stack. … There's a ton of pressure to win immediately and keep it going, but I think the real measurement is if Marcus can land those two or three difference-makers Brian's guys never could."

CONNECTICUT HUSKIES

National Forecast: 129 • Projected Record: 2-10

2022 SCHEDULE

Aug. 27	at Utah State
Sept. 3	Central Connecticut
Sept. 10	Syracuse
Sept. 17	at Michigan
Sept. 24	at NC State
Oct. 1	Fresno State
Oct. 8	at FIU
Oct. 15	at Ball State
Oct. 29	Boston College
Nov. 5	UMass
Nov. 12	Liberty
Nov. 19	at Army

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 1-11

Aug. 28	at Fresno State	L	0-45
Sept. 4	Holy Cross	L	28-38
Sept. 11	Purdue	L	0-49
Sept. 18	at Army	L	21-52
Sept. 25	Wyoming	L	22-24
Oct. 2	at Vanderbilt	L	28-30
Oct. 9	at UMass	L	13-27
Oct. 16	Yale	W	21-15
Oct. 22	Middle Tennessee	L	13-44
Nov. 13	at Clemson	L	7-44
Nov. 20	at UCF	L	17-49
Nov. 27	Houston	L	17-45

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	NATIONAL
Scoring	15.6 ppg	129
Rushing	100.8 ypg	122
Passing	164.2 ypg	116
Total	265.0 ypg	128

DEFENSE	PER GAME	NATIONAL
Scoring	38.5 ppg	123
Rushing	195.2 ypg	110
Passing	258.0 ypg	105
Total	453.2 ypg	116

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	NATIONAL
-8	-0.67	118

STAT CORNER

68

Connecticut averaged a 24.5 percent passing success rate, dead last in college football. Out of 282 dropbacks, the Huskies ran just 68 successful plays.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Tyler Phommachanh, 72-35-321-2, 1 TD
Rushing: Nate Carter, 125 att., 578 yds., 2 TDs
Receiving: Keelan Marion, 28 rec., 474 yds., 5 TDs
Tackles: Jackson Mitchell, 120
Sacks: Kevon Jones, Ian Swenson, 2.0
Interceptions: Tre Wortham, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Jim L. Mora
Record at School: First Season
Career Record: 46-30 (6 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Nick Charlton
Defensive Coordinator: Lou Spanos
Location: Storrs, CT
Stadium: Rentschler Field (40,000)

OFFENSE Quarterback Ta'Quan Roberson transferred in from Penn State and immediately separated himself during the spring. Cale Millen, a former Oregon transfer, and Tyler Phommachanh, who suffered a season-ending knee injury last season, also will compete this summer for the starting role. Those three should allow for highly touted incoming freshman Zion Turner to redshirt.

At running back, junior college transfer Will Knight will share carries with Nate Carter, who rushed for 578 yards last season. Brian Brewton will see a lot of time in both the run and pass game.

The deepest position on the roster is certainly at wide receiver. The addition of Nigel Fitzgerald, an Old Dominion transfer, brings the Huskies a tall, physical downfield threat. He will work on one side of the field, while Keelan Marion and a healthy Cameron Ross should round out the Huskies top three receivers. Fitzgerald's presence will draw defenses' attention away from both Marion and Ross, who both had stellar true freshman seasons — Marion in 2021 and Ross in 2019.

Up front, Dartmouth transfer Jake Guidone solidifies things at center, while Christian Haynes is a force at right guard. Replacing Ryan Van Demark at left tackle is paramount, a task that will be settled in fall camp.

DEFENSE Linebacker Jackson Mitchell is back after a stellar 2021, when he finished 12th nationally in tackles. Transfers are also littered throughout this side of the ball, including two linebackers who will bolster the unit, Marquez Bembry from Kentucky and Brandon Bouyer-Randle from Texas Tech and previously Michigan State. The Huskies have moved Kevon Jones back to his natural, hybrid outside linebacker position to help generate a pass rush.

On the defensive line, transfer Sokoya McDuffie will try to fill the void left by Travis Jones. McDuffie, standing at 6'5", 318 pounds, at least looks the part.

The Huskies' back end is solid at safety with Durante Jones and Malik Dixon, but corners are a question mark due to inexperience. The uber-athletic Kaleb Anthony stepped into the top corner spot this spring and performed well.

SPECIALISTS The Huskies will be solid on special teams, led by return specialist Brian Brewton, who was a Freshman All-American by some publications in 2021 following a season that saw him break two kicks for scores, including the opening kickoff at Clemson. Kicker Joe McFadden will look to build off a freshman season in which he missed just five kicks for the year and was perfect on extra points.

FINAL ANALYSIS The program is in a welcome state of change with the arrival of new head coach Jim Mora. He has hired an experienced staff, including offensive coordinator Nick Charlton, who will immediately improve an offense that was looking for some sort of organization. But while this season will be more competitive, don't count on wins right out of the gate given the tough early schedule.

JACKSON MITCHELL

AP Photo/Mark Humphrey

> "This hire was really confusing, but give Jim [Mora] credit for making some smart personnel moves. Most of their coaches have good contacts in the northeast."
>
> —An opposing assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Zion Turner, QB, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	★★★
2	Donovan Branch, Edge, Winter Garden, FL	★★★
3	Matt Hoffman, TE, Wyncote, PA	★★★
4	Victor Rosa, ATH, Bristol, CT	★★★
5	Nikko Pohahau, OT, Mountain View, CA*	★★★
6	Brady Wayburn, OT, Windsor, CT	★★★
7	Derek Spearman, S, Windsor, CT	★★★
8	Timothy Passmore, DL, Cocoa, FL	★★★
9	D'Mon Brinson, CB, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	★★★
10	Nathan Voorhis, Edge, Stroudsburg, PA	★★

*junior college transfer

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)

WR	2	Nigel Fitzgerald (Sr.)	**86**	**Kevens Clercius (So.)**
WR	**7**	**Cameron Ross (So.)**	**5**	**Aaron Turner (So.)**
WR	**1**	**Keelan Marion (So.)**	**4**	**Matt Drayton (So.)**
LT	71	Valentin Senn (So.)	79	Danny Antolovich (Fr.)
LG	**62**	**Noel Ofori-Nyadu (Jr.)**	60	Mason Raymer (So.)
C	72	Jake Guidone (Sr.)	51	Yakiri Walker (Fr.)
RG	**64**	**Christian Haynes (Jr.)**	55	Gamaliel Barboza (Sr.)
RT	67	Christopher Fortin (So.)	**75**	**Chase Lundt (So.)**
TE	83	Brandon Niemenski (So.)	87	Bo Estes (So.)
QB		Cale Millen (So.)	6	Ta'Quan Roberson (So.)
RB	0	Will Knight (Jr.)	26	Nate Carter (So.)

DEFENSE (7)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	**95**	**Eric Watts (Jr.)**	90	Pryce Yates (Fr.)
DT	96	Dal'mont Gourdine (So.)	55	Marquayveon Evans (So.)
DE	99	Sokoya McDuffie (Jr.)	91	Collin McCarthy (So.)
LB	**48**	**Kevon Jones (Sr.)**		Brandon Bouyer-Randle (Sr.)
LB	**6**	**Ian Swenson (Sr.)**	29	Jordan Morrison (Jr.)
LB	**43**	**Jackson Mitchell (Jr.)**	33	Hunter Webb (Jr.)
LB	11	Marquez Bembry (Jr.)	46	John Bechtle (So.)
CB	2	Myles Bell (Jr.)	**7**	**Tre Wortham (Sr.)**
CB	12	Kaleb Anthony (So.)	14	Malcolm Bell (Fr.)
S	**19**	**Durante Jones (So.)**	22	Alfred Chea (So.)
S	**31**	**Malik Dixon (So.)**	20	Deon McLean Jr. (Fr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	84	Joe McFadden (So.)	**KR**	28	Brian Brewton (So.)
P	99	Haydn Kerr (So.)	**PR**	1	Keelan Marion (So.)

LIBERTY FLAMES

National Forecast: 73 • Projected Record: 7-5

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	at Southern Miss
Sept. 10	UAB
Sept. 17	at Wake Forest
Sept. 24	Akron
Oct. 1	at Old Dominion
Oct. 8	at UMass
Oct. 15	Gardner-Webb
Oct. 22	BYU
Nov. 5	at Arkansas
Nov. 12	at UConn
Nov. 19	Virginia Tech
Nov. 26	New Mexico State

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 8-5

Sept. 4	Campbell	W	48-7
Sept. 11	at Troy	W	21-13
Sept. 18	Old Dominion	W	45-17
Sept. 24	at Syracuse	L	21-24
Oct. 2	at UAB	W	36-12
Oct. 9	Middle Tennessee	W	41-13
Oct. 16	at ULM	L	28-31
Oct. 23	at North Texas	W	35-26
Oct. 30	UMass	W	62-17
Nov. 6	at Ole Miss	L	14-27
Nov. 20	Louisiana	L	14-42
Nov. 27	Army	L	16-31
Dec. 18	vs. Eastern Michigan #	W	56-20

#Lending Tree Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	NATIONAL
Scoring	33.6 ppg	25
Rushing	180.8 ypg	46
Passing	255.4 ypg	44
Total	436.2 ypg	35

DEFENSE	PER GAME	NATIONAL
Scoring	21.5 ppg	24
Rushing	139.9 ypg	45
Passing	180.3 ypg	6
Total	320.2 ypg	11

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	NATIONAL
-9	-0.69	121

STAT CORNER

33

Liberty ranked fourth nationally in big play defense; the Flames allowed only 33 plays of 20-plus yards all season.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Johnathan Bennett, 33-15-299-2, 4 TDs
Rushing: T.J. Green, 75 att., 477 yds., 4 TDs
Receiving: Demario Douglas, 52 rec., 701 yds., 6 TDs
Tackles: Javon Scruggs, 61
Sacks: Kendy Charles, 5.0
Interceptions: Four players tied with 1

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Hugh Freeze
Record at School: 26-11 (3 years)
Career Record: 95-43 (11 years)
Offensive Coordinators: Kent Austin, Maurice Harris
Defensive Coordinators: Josh Aldridge, Jack Curtis
Location: Lynchburg, VA
Stadium: Williams Stadium (25,000)

OFFENSE Liberty relied on the electric play of quarterback Malik Willis to reach new heights over the last two seasons. The dual-threat signal-caller was a once-in-a-generation talent, and head coach Hugh Freeze admits it will be challenging to replace him.

Freeze found Willis in the transfer portal, and he hopes finding veteran QB Charlie Brewer in the portal will keep the offense humming along. Brewer played in big games at Baylor and Utah over the past five seasons and accumulated more than 11,000 yards of total offense. Brewer has a deep wide receiving corps to work with at Liberty.

Campbell transfer Caleb Snead was an FCS All-American in 2021 and gives the Flames a dynamic outside playmaker to complement slot receiver Demario Douglas. CJ Yarbrough returns following a one-year sabbatical and is a reliable option on the boundary.

The offensive line was upgraded through the transfer portal. Cam Reddy will start at center after transferring from Colorado State, and Kentucky transfer Nassir Watkins will protect Brewer's blind side at left tackle.

DEFENSE The unit has to replace both inside linebackers (Storey Jackson and Rashaad Harding) and both interior linemen (Ralfs Rusins and Elijah James) after ranking 11th in total defense for the second straight season.

Mike Smith Jr., from Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College, is expected to start at Mike linebacker alongside Tyren Dupree. Former defensive end Aakil Washington has moved to linebacker for first and second downs, and he'll be used at end with TreShaun Clark and Durrell Johnson in obvious passing situations.

Tackle Kendy Charles moves up the depth chart after recording 4.5 sacks last season. Newcomer Dre Butler (Auburn) is expected to line up alongside Charles at nose guard, with freshman Bryce Dixon finding his way into the rotation. Chris Boti should see more playing time after recording 17 tackles in nine games last season.

Javon Scruggs leads a secondary that ranked sixth in passing defense in 2021. Robert Rahimi replaces Cedric Stone at rover, and converted cornerback Quinton Reese gets his chance to start at strong safety after missing the final seven games of 2021 with a torn meniscus.

SPECIALISTS Liberty ranked 85th in punt return average and was 81st in kickoff returns. Four different kickers attempted extra points, with Brayden Beck ultimately securing the job. Beck made 4-of-5 field-goal attempts while going 34-of-37 on extra points. Aidan Alves returns to be the punter.

FINAL ANALYSIS Liberty enters its final season as an independent before joining Conference USA for the 2023 campaign. The final independent season features four Power 5 opponents in Wake Forest, BYU, Arkansas and Virginia Tech, and it is the gaudiest slate the Flames have put together since transitioning to FBS in 2018. Liberty will have to navigate the treacherous terrain to advance to a fourth bowl game in Freeze's fourth season at the helm.

DEMARIO DOUGLAS

Liberty Athletics

> "Charlie Brewer could work out nicely for them at quarterback — he's got a lot of experience — but the offense will look very different if he's the guy."
>
> —An opposing assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Markel Fortenberry, WR, Maryville, TN	★★★
2	Brylan Green, CB, Lafayette, LA	★★★
3	Mike Smith Jr., LB, Ridgeland, MS*	★★★
4	Reggie Young II, OL, New Orleans, LA*	★★★
5	Miyon Conaway, Edge, Hazlehurst, GA	★★★
6	Jayden Sweeney, S, Pinson, AL	★★★
7	Jordan Norwood, LB, Littleton, CO	★★★
8	Bryce Dixon, DL, Matthews, NC	★★★
9	CJ Bazile Jr., Edge, Hollywood, FL	★★★
10	Dexter Ricks Jr., CB, Milledgeville, GA	★★★

*junior college transfer

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (3)

WR	13	CJ Yarbrough (Jr.)	5	Noah Frith (Jr.)
WR	8	Caleb Snead (Sr.)	21	Treon Sibley (So.)
WR	3	Demario Douglas (So.)	6	Jaivian Lofton (Jr.)
LT	65	Nassir Watkins (Sr.)	52	Jonathan Graham (Jr.)
LG	**64**	**Jacob Bodden (Jr.)**	50	Chase Mitchell (So.)
C	60	Cam Reddy (Sr.)	51	Harrison Hayes (So.)
RG	**54**	**Brendan Schlittler (Jr.)**	79	John Kourtis (Jr.)
RT	**77**	**Cooper McCaw (Sr.)**	70	Reggie Young (Sr.)
TE	88	Jerome Jackson (Sr.)	83	Austin Henderson (So.)
QB	16	Charlie Brewer (Sr.)	7	Kaidon Salter (Fr.)
RB	15	T.J. Green (Sr.)	0	Dae Dae Hunter (So.)

DEFENSE (4)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	**10**	**TreShaun Clark (Jr.)**	77	Khristian Zachary (So.)
NG	15	Dre Butler (Sr.)	92	Chris Boti (So.)
DT	91	Kendy Charles (So.)	99	Bryce Dixon (Fr.)
DE	**11**	**Durrell Johnson (Sr.)**	3	Stephen Sings V (So.)
MLB	7	Mike Smith Jr. (Jr.)	34	Ahmad Walker (So.)
WLB	35	Tyren Dupree (Jr.)	24	Aakil Washington (So.)
CB	**4**	**Chris Megginson (Jr.)**	20	Kobe Singleton (So.)
CB	8	Daijahn Anthony (Jr.)	26	Amarian Williams (So.)
ROV	6	Robert Rahimi (Jr.)	22	Jayden Sweeney (Fr.)
SS	16	Quinton Reese (So.)	9	Juawan Treadwell (Sr.)
FS	**1**	**Javon Scruggs (Sr.)**	13	Jaylon Jimmerson (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	83	Brayden Beck (So.)	KR	1	Shedro Louis (Jr.)
P	46	Aidan Alves (Sr.)	PR	3	Demario Douglas (So.)

NEW MEXICO STATE AGGIES

National Forecast: 130 • Projected Record: 2-10

2022 SCHEDULE

Aug. 27	Nevada
Sept. 1	at Minnesota
Sept. 10	at UTEP
Sept. 17	at Wisconsin
Sept. 24	Hawaii
Oct. 1	FIU
Oct. 15	New Mexico
Oct. 22	San Jose State
Oct. 29	at UMass
Nov. 12	Lamar
Nov. 19	at Missouri
Nov. 26	at Liberty

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 2-10

Aug. 28	UTEP	L	3-30
Sept. 4	at San Diego State	L	10-28
Sept. 11	at New Mexico	L	25-34
Sept. 18	South Carolina St.	W	43-35
Sept. 25	Hawaii	L	21-41
Oct. 2	at San Jose State	L	31-37
Oct. 9	at Nevada	L	28-55
Oct. 23	at Hawaii	L	34-48
Nov. 6	Utah State	L	13-35
Nov. 13	at Alabama	L	3-59
Nov. 20	at Kentucky	L	16-56
Nov. 27	UMass	W	44-27

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	NATIONAL
Scoring	22.6 ppg	105
Rushing	99.8 ypg	123
Passing	270.0 ypg	25
Total	369.8 ypg	90

DEFENSE	PER GAME	NATIONAL
Scoring	40.4 ppg	128
Rushing	197.5 ypg	112
Passing	291.0 ypg	128
Total	488.5 ypg	127

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	NATIONAL
+3	+0.25	44

STAT CORNER

47.8%

New Mexico State made things a little too easy for opponents in 2021. The Aggies allowed a 47.8 percent passing success rate last season, ranking 127th nationally in defensive efficiency.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Dino Maldonado, 66-37-513-2, 4 TDs
Rushing: O'Maury Samuels, 65 att., 202 yds., 1 TD
Receiving: Thomaz Whitford, 19 rec., 206 yds., 2 TDs
Tackles: Trevor Brohard, Chris Ojoh, 71
Sacks: Chris Ojoh, 5.0
Interceptions: D.J. McCullough, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Jerry Kill
Record at School: First Season
Career Record: 154-101 (22+ years)
Offensive Coordinator: Tim Beck
Defensive Coordinator: Nate Dreiling
Location: Las Cruces, NM
Stadium: Aggie Memorial Stadium (28,853)

OFFENSE Head coach Jerry Kill is bringing a form of TCU's multiple offensive formation to New Mexico State in hopes of improving the running attack and creating a tougher mentality, especially on the line.

Albuquerque product Diego Pavia, who led New Mexico Military Institute to a juco national championship last year, emerged from a four-quarterback competition to head into the fall as the likely starter. Kill says, however, that NMSU will still look for another arm to join the team. Sophomore Weston Eget, who gained a little bit of game experience last year, also could be in the mix.

NMSU is counting on a couple of newcomers to bolster the rushing attack. Juco transfer Jamoni Jones and Ahmonte Watkins, a speedy transfer from TCU, will get the first shots to carry the load. Incoming freshman Makhilyn Young also will get a look to add depth.

Wide receiver Ta'ir Brooks, a juco transfer from Laney (Calif.) College, was one of the surprises of spring practice; he and senior Justice Powers lead a wideout group that Kill touts as one of the team's more talented units. Junior Thomaz Whitford has the tight end spot, with converted linebacker Eric Marsh likely to play as well.

The offensive line remains a concern, but Kill feels good about senior left tackle Gabriel Preciado and juco center Canaan Yarro. Isaiah Mursalat has one of the guard spots, but the Aggies need to find two other starters along with some depth to compete in 2022.

DEFENSE Junior Mike Edwards could provide pressure from the rush end spot to help execute NMSU's aggressive 4-2-5 scheme. Donavan King and Lazarus Williams also will see time at end. Junior Justin Segura and sophomore Lama Lavea will start on the interior.

Seniors Trevor Brohard and Chris Ojoh give NMSU a solid starting duo at linebacker. The Aggies will look to sophomores Josh Ferguson and Nick Giacolone as backup support.

NMSU will plug Michigan transfer Andre Seldon into its five-player backfield. Senior Devlin Kirklin will start on the boundary, and sophomore Dylan Early will start at free safety. Juco transfer Nate Bryant and incoming freshman Malachi McLean also should be part of the rotation. Junior Syrus Dumas has one cornerback spot nailed down. Returning starter D.J. McCullough, Torren Union and BJ Sculark will look to complement Dumas.

SPECIALISTS Kill is comfortable with returning kicker Ethan Albertson and punter Josh Carlson. Both can make up for shortcomings elsewhere. Seldon and Watkins are speedy returners. Sophomore wide receiver PJ Johnson III also could get a chance.

FINAL ANALYSIS Kill says he was pleasantly surprised by the talent he had and that his players have done everything he's asked of them so far. If NMSU can survive a trio of games against Power 5 foes, the Aggies could be competitive against the rest of their schedule and win some close games on the strength of their special teams.

CHRIS OJOH

Sam Wasson/Getty Images

> "Jerry Kill's got a lot of experience, but he doesn't know that area at all. They need to work Arizona and Texas better in recruiting or become a Second Chance U type of place in the portal."
>
> —An opposing assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Jai Rodriguez, OT, Phoenix, AZ	★★★
2	Rashad McKinley, WR, St. Paul, MN	★★★
3	Jaden Robinson, Edge, Dallas, TX	★★★
4	Keyshaun Elliott, ATH, Richmond, MO	★★★
5	Jamoni Jones, RB, Miami, OK*	★★★
6	Malachi McLean, S, Manvel, TX	★★★
7	Kordell David, WR, Athens, TX*	★★★
8	Ta'ir Brooks, WR, Oakland, CA*	★★★
9	Gabe Peterson, LB, Overland Park, KS	★★★
10	Pierce Humpich, ATH, Louisville, KY	★★

*junior college transfer

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (2)

WR	6	Justice Powers (Sr.)	18	Jordin Parker (Jr.)
WR	2	Ta'ir Brooks (Jr.)	0	Dominic Gicinto (Sr.)
WR	11	Kordell David (Jr.)	1	Chris Bellamy (Jr.)
LT	**78**	**Gabriel Preciado (Sr.)**	62	Jae'vone Brown (So.)
LG	71	Louie Canepa (Fr.)	71	Shiyazh Pete (So.)
C	56	Canaan Yarro (So.)	54	Isaiah Mursalat (Jr.)
RG	54	Isaiah Mursalat (Jr.)	56	Will Thomas (Fr.)
RT	**77**	**Carson Pharris (So.)**	69	Doro Omerhi (Sr.)
TE	85	Thomaz Whitford (Sr.)	48	Eric Marsh (Sr.)
QB	10	Diego Pavia (Jr.)	17	Weston Eget (So.)
RB	1	Jamoni Jones (So.)	7	Ahmonte Watkins (So.)

DEFENSE (7)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	**26**	**Donavan King (Sr.)**	19	Lezeric Bailey (So.)
DT	25	Lama Lavea (So.)	18	Marcus Buckley (Sr.)
DT	**91**	**Justin Segura (Jr.)**	95	Devin Bell (Jr.)
DE	31	Mike Edwards (Jr.)	10	Lazarus Williams (Sr.)
LB	**80**	**Trevor Brohard (Sr.)**	**4**	**Josh Ferguson (So.)**
LB	**3**	**Chris Ojoh (Sr.)**	24	Nick Giacolone (So.)
CB	**13**	**Syrus Dumas (Jr.)**	15	Torren Union (So.)
CB	**7**	**D.J. McCullough (Sr.)**	0	BJ Sculark (Jr.)
NB	8	Andre Seldon (Jr.)	20	Mehki Miller (So.)
SS	1	Devlin Kirklin (Sr.)		Nate Bryant (So.)
FS	28	Dylan Early (So.)	6	Malachi McLean (Fr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	84	Ethan Albertson (Jr.)	KR	7	Ahmonte Watkins (So.)
P	35	Josh Carlson (Jr.)	PR	8	Andre Seldon (Jr.)

UMASS MINUTEMEN

National Forecast: 131 • Projected Record: 1-11

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	at Tulane
Sept. 10	at Toledo
Sept. 17	Stony Brook
Sept. 24	at Temple
Oct. 1	at Eastern Michigan
Oct. 8	Liberty
Oct. 15	Buffalo
Oct. 29	New Mexico State
Nov. 5	at UConn
Nov. 12	at Arkansas State
Nov. 19	at Texas A&M
Nov. 26	Army

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 1-11

Sept. 4	at Pittsburgh	L	7-51
Sept. 11	Boston College	L	28-45
Sept. 18	Eastern Michigan	L	28-42
Sept. 25	at Coastal Carolina	L	3-53
Oct. 2	Toledo	L	7-45
Oct. 9	UConn	W	27-13
Oct. 23	at Florida State	L	3-59
Oct. 30	at Liberty	L	17-62
Nov. 6	Rhode Island	L	22-35
Nov. 13	Maine	L	10-35
Nov. 20	at Army	L	17-33
Nov. 27	at New Mexico State	L	27-44

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	NATIONAL
Scoring	16.3 ppg	126
Rushing	147.7 ypg	79
Passing	152.7 ypg	123
Total	300.3 ypg	123

DEFENSE	PER GAME	NATIONAL
Scoring	43.1 ppg	130
Rushing	235.4 ypg	126
Passing	249.6 ypg	100
Total	485.0 ypg	125

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	NATIONAL
-10	-0.83	123

STAT CORNER

14

The Minutemen offense created only 14 plays of 20-plus yards in 2021, ranking 130th in passing efficiency with a -0.392 EPA/pass.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Brady Olson, 216-104-1,145-7, 8 TDs
Rushing: Ellis Merriweather, 218 att., 1,138 yds., 5 TDs
Receiving: Rico Arnold, 27 rec., 461 yds., 3 TDs
Tackles: Gerrell Johnson, 80
Sacks: Uchenna Ezewike, 2.5
Interceptions: Donte Lindsey, 1

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Don Brown
Record at School: 43-19 (5 years)
Career Record: 95-45 (12 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Steve Casula
Defensive Coordinator: Keith Dudzinski
Location: Amherst, MA
Stadium: McGuirk Alumni Stadium (17,000)

OFFENSE UMass had just 25 touchdowns in 12 games last year, so there's a lot of work to be done on offense. In new coordinator Steve Casula's spread system, the Minutemen will likely lean heavily on running the ball early, as UMass has as much depth and talent at running back as any other position on offense.

Ellis Merriweather was a bright spot last year on offense with 1,138 rushing yards and five touchdowns. Louisville transfer Greg Desrosiers Jr., a Massachusetts kid who didn't play as a freshman for the Cardinals, is expected to be an impact player in the Minutemen backfield.

At quarterback, Zamar Wise's running ability gives him a hair's width edge over Brady Olson and junior college transfer Gino Campiotti.

Led by Jacob Orlando, tight end play was a bright spot in spring practice. Rico Arnold, last year's leading receiver, is back and will be looked to for considerable production. George Johnson III, who played defensive back at Michigan, transferred to UMass to play receiver and is expected to be a starter right away in the slot.

DEFENSE When Don Brown was a defensive coordinator at UMass in 1998-99 and the head coach of the Minutemen from 2004-08, he was creating the blitz-heavy system that has defined his career as the coordinator at Maryland, Boston College, UConn, Michigan and Arizona. To succeed, he needs guys who can rush up front and guys who can cover in the back. He was pleasantly surprised by his team's readiness to play that way.

Defensive ends Marcus Bradley from Vanderbilt and Marcus Cushnie from Florida State have both looked promising up front. Sophomore Jordan Mahoney was a spring standout at corner.

Rutgers transfer Zukudo Igewenagu and Jalen Stewart, a junior college addition, will help fortify the linebacker room, while Penn State transfer Tyler Rudolph should play an important role at safety.

SPECIALISTS Up and down the UMass roster, the depth chart might look a lot different in October than it will to open the year, but nowhere is that more the case than at the specialist spots. Cameron Carson will get first crack at field goals and extra points. AJ Vinatieri, the son of NFL legend Adam Vinatieri, doesn't arrive until July but could be the favorite to punt.

FINAL ANALYSIS UMass was 1–11 and lost to two FCS teams in 2021, a point that the program hopes will mark its rock bottom.

After Charley Molnar, Mark Whipple and Walt Bell failed to bring UMass a first winning season in FBS, the Minutemen brought back Brown, their last coach with a winning record. He's been active in the transfer portal, already adding several players with multiple years of eligibility, and he is expected to add more this summer.

The Minutemen play seven of their 12 games on the road but just one against a Power 5 opponent, giving them a chance to at least be competitive as they build.

ELLIS MERRIWEATHER

M. Anthony Nesmith/Icon Sportswire via Getty Images

> "Don Brown's a great coach; he's a defensive legend for sure. They'll be well-coached, but they're not going to win games."
>
> —An opposing assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Aaron Alexander, LB, Belleville, MI	★★★
2	Cornelius Wright, CB, Miami, FL	★★★
3	Jeremiah McGill, S, Hollywood, FL	★★★
4	Derrieon Craig, LB, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	★★★
5	Donta Whack, RB, Sanford, FL	★★★
6	Chase Brewster, QB, Tilton, NH	★★★
7	AJ Vinatieri, K, Zionsville, IN	★★★
8	Donovan Turner, CB, Long Beach, CA	★★★
9	Jalen Stewart, LB, Bethlehem, PA*	★★★
10	Juan Lua, CB, Palm Desert, CA*	★★

*junior college transfer

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (9)

WR	**2**	**Rico Arnold (Sr.)**	0	Jacquon Gibson (Fr.)
WR	**11**	**Onuma Dieke (So.)**	**1**	**Jermaine "OC" Johnson (Jr.)**
WR	4	George Johnson III (Jr.)	8	Jamir Roberts (So.)
LT	**61**	**Max Longman (So.)**	78	Phil Jeffs (So.)
LG	75	Xavier Graham (So.)	62	Hunter Salmon (So.)
C	60	Josh Atwood (So.)	49	Charles Payson (Jr.)
RG	**72**	**Ethan Mottinger (So.)**	79	Ryan Mosesso (So.)
RT	**58**	**Jonny Hassard (So.)**	79	Ryan Mosesso (So.)
TE	87	Jacob Orlando (So.)	**16**	**Josiah Johnson (Jr.)**
QB	6	Zamar Wise (So.)	**12**	**Brady Olson (So.)**
RB	**7**	**Ellis Merriweather (Sr.)**	3	Greg Desrosiers Jr. (Fr.)

DEFENSE (5)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	1	Marcus Bradley (Fr.)	15	Vic Alobwede (So.)
NT	**56**	**Cletus Mathurin (Jr.)**	66	Aditya Singh (So.)
DT	**99**	**Hugo Klages (So.)**	44	Aaron Beckwith (So.)
DE	0	Marcus Cushnie (Sr.)	52	Uchenna Ezewike (Jr.)
LB	10	Zukudo Igwenagu (Jr.)	40	Dominic Schofield (So.)
LB	9	Myles Turner (So.)	23	Jalen Stewart (Fr.)
LB	11	Nahji Logan (So.)	**22**	**Gerrell Johnson (So.)**
CB	7	Jordan Mahoney (So.)	4	Noah Boykin (Jr.)
CB	**12**	**Josh Wallace (Jr.)**	8	Tristan Armstrong (So.)
SS	**21**	**Te'Rai Powell (So.)**	14	Javon Batten (So.)
FS	2	Tyler Rudolph (Jr.)	25	Juan Lua (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	91	Cameron Carson (So.)	KR	8	Jamir Roberts (So.)
P		AJ Vinatieri (Fr.)	PR	8	Jamir Roberts (So.)

MAC PREVIEW

EAST DIVISION
PREDICTED ORDER OF FINISH

1	MIAMI (OHIO) **REDHAWKS**	7-6, 6-2
2	KENT STATE **GOLDEN FLASHES**	6-6, 5-3
3	BOWLING GREEN **FALCONS**	4-8, 3-5
4	OHIO **BOBCATS**	4-8, 3-5
5	BUFFALO **BULLS**	4-8, 2-6
6	AKRON **ZIPS**	3-9, 2-6

WEST DIVISION
PREDICTED ORDER OF FINISH

1	NORTHERN ILLINOIS **HUSKIES**	8-5, 6-2
2	TOLEDO **ROCKETS**	8-4, 6-2
3	CENTRAL MICHIGAN **CHIPPEWAS**	7-5, 5-3
4	WESTERN MICHIGAN **BRONCOS**	6-6, 5-3
5	EASTERN MICHIGAN **EAGLES**	5-7, 3-5
6	BALL STATE **CARDINALS**	4-8, 2-6

Games to Watch

Miami (Ohio) vs. Cincinnati,* Sept. 17
Pittsburgh at Western Michigan, Sept. 17
Miami (Ohio) at Northwestern, Sept. 24
Toledo at Northern Illinois, Oct. 8
Kent State at Miami (Ohio), Oct. 8
Ohio at Miami (Ohio), Nov. 8
Kent State at Toledo, Oct. 15
Western Michigan at Miami (Ohio), Oct. 22
Central Michigan at Northern Illinois, Nov. 2
Northern Illinois at Western Michigan, Nov. 9
Western Michigan at Central Michigan, Nov. 16
Miami (Ohio) at Northern Illinois, Nov. 16

*Paul Brown Stadium

ROCKY LOMBARDI

Northern Illinois Athletics

MAC Championship:
Northern Illinois over Miami (Ohio)

Recruiting by School

1. Miami (Ohio)
2. Buffalo
3. Northern Illinois
4. Central Michigan
5. Kent State
6. Toledo
7. Ball State
8. Western Michigan
9. Bowling Green
10. Akron
11. Eastern Michigan
12. Ohio

ALL-MAC TEAM

FIRST-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	**Brett Gabbert**	Jr.	Miami (Ohio)
RB	**Lew Nichols III**	So.	Central Michigan
RB	**Marquez Cooper**	Jr.	Kent State
AP	**Hassan Beydoun**	Sr.	Eastern Michigan
WR	**Dante Cephas**	Jr.	Kent State
WR	**Trayvon Rudolph**	So.	Northern Illinois
TE	**Christian Sims**	Sr.	Bowling Green
C	**Rusty Feth**	Jr.	Miami (Ohio)
OL	**Sidy Sow**	Sr.	Eastern Michigan
OL	**Nolan Potter Jr.**	So.	Northern Illinois
OL	**Brian Dooley**	Jr.	Eastern Michigan
OL	**Logan Zschernitz**	So.	Northern Illinois

FIRST-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	**Jamal Hines**	Sr.	Toledo
DL	**Desjuan Johnson**	Sr.	Toledo
DL	**Daymond Williams**	Sr.	Buffalo
DL	**Jose Ramirez**	Jr.	Eastern Michigan
DL	**Karl Brooks**	Sr.	Bowling Green
LB	**Darren Anders**	Sr.	Bowling Green
LB	**James Patterson**	Sr.	Buffalo
LB	**Corvin Moment**	Sr.	Western Michigan
CB	**Davon Ferguson**	Sr.	Bowling Green
CB	**Jordan Gandy**	Jr.	Northern Illinois
S	**CJ Brown**	So.	Northern Illinois
S	**Jordan Anderson**	Sr.	Bowling Green

FIRST-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	**John Richardson**	Jr.	Northern Illinois
KR	**Trayvon Rudolph**	So.	Northern Illinois
P	**Luke Elzinga**	So.	Central Michigan
PR	**Devin Maddox**	Jr.	Toledo

SECOND-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	**Rocky Lombardi**	Sr.	Northern Illinois
RB	**Sean Tyler**	Jr.	Western Michigan
RB	**Harrison Waylee**	So.	Northern Illinois
AP	**Corey Crooms**	Jr.	Western Michigan
WR	**Mac Hippenhammer**	Sr.	Miami (Ohio)
WR	**Dallas Dixon**	Sr.	Central Michigan
TE	**Tristian Brank**	So.	Akron
C	**Jamezz Kimbrough**	Sr.	Central Michigan
OL	**Caleb Shaffer**	Jr.	Miami (Ohio)
OL	**Dylan Deatherage**	Sr.	Western Michigan
OL	**Tyler Long**	Jr.	Toledo
OL	**Jacob Gideon**	So.	Western Michigan

SECOND-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	**James Ester**	So.	Northern Illinois
DL	**John Wesley Whiteside**	Sr.	Central Michigan
DL	**Walter Haire**	Sr.	Bowling Green
DL	**Bubba Arslanian**	Sr.	Akron
LB	**Dyontae Johnson**	Sr.	Toledo
LB	**Zaire Barnes**	Sr.	Western Michigan
LB	**Matthew Salopek**	So.	Miami (Ohio)
LB	**Brandon Martin**	Sr.	Ball State
CB	**Amechi Uzodinma II**	Sr.	Ball State
CB	**Dorian Jackson**	Sr.	Western Michigan
S	**Tariq Drake**	Sr.	Ohio
S	**Maxen Hook**	So.	Toledo

SECOND-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	**Marshall Meeder**	So.	Central Michigan
KR	**Ja'Shaun Poke**	Sr.	Kent State
P	**Nick Mihalic**	Sr.	Western Michigan
PR	**Jalen Walker**	Sr.	Miami (Ohio)

THIRD-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	**Dequan Finn**	So.	Toledo
RB	**Carson Steele**	So.	Ball State
RB	**La'Darius Jefferson**	Sr.	Western Michigan
AP	**Jayshon Jackson**	Sr.	Ball State
WR	**Devin Maddox**	Jr.	Toledo
WR	**Quian Williams**	Sr.	Buffalo
TE	**Jack Coldiron**	So.	Miami (Ohio)
C	**Jakari Robinson**	Sr.	Bowling Green
OL	**Ethan Crowe**	So.	Ball State
OL	**Zach Whaley**	Sr.	Kent State
OL	**Marques Cox**	Jr.	Northern Illinois
OL	**Gabe Wallace**	Sr.	Buffalo

THIRD-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	**Braden Fiske**	Jr.	Western Michigan
DL	**Austin Ertl**	Jr.	Miami (Ohio)
DL	**Tavion Woodard**	Jr.	Ball State
DL	**Max Michel**	Sr.	Buffalo
DL	**Marshawn Kneeland**	So.	Western Michigan
LB	**Bryce Houston**	Sr.	Ohio
LB	**Clayton Coll**	Sr.	Ball State
LB	**Cannon Blauser**	Jr.	Ohio
CB	**Donte Kent**	So.	Central Michigan
CB	**Quinyon Mitchell**	So.	Toledo
S	**Nate Bauer**	Jr.	Toledo
S	**Dean Clark**	Sr.	Kent State

THIRD-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	**Andrew Glass**	So.	Kent State
KR	**Ron Cook Jr.**	Sr.	Buffalo
P	**Jonah Wieland**	Sr.	Ohio
PR	**Hassan Beydoun**	Sr.	Eastern Michigan

2022 BOWL PROJECTIONS

Arizona Bowl
Toledo vs. Fresno State

Bahamas Bowl
Western Michigan vs. Florida Atlantic

Camellia Bowl
Miami (Ohio) vs. South Alabama

Famous Idaho Potato Bowl
Northern Illinois vs. Air Force

LendingTree Bowl
Kent State vs. Marshall

Quick Lane Bowl
Central Michigan vs. Minnesota

2021 STANDINGS

East	MAC	Overall
Kent State	6-2	7-7
Miami (Ohio)	5-3	7-6
Ohio	3-5	3-9
Bowling Green	2-6	4-8
Buffalo	2-6	4-8
Akron	1-7	2-10

West	MAC	Overall
Northern Illinois	6-2	9-5
Central Michigan	6-2	9-4
Toledo	5-3	7-6
Ball State	4-4	6-7
Eastern Michigan	4-4	7-6
Western Michigan	4-4	8-5

2021 BOWL RESULTS

Bahamas Bowl
Middle Tennessee 31, Toledo 24

LendingTree Bowl
Liberty 56, Eastern Michigan 20

Famous Idaho Potato Bowl
Wyoming 52, Kent State 38

Frisco Football Classic
Miami (Ohio) 27, North Texas 14

Camellia Bowl
Georgia State 51, Ball State 20

Quick Lane Bowl
Western Michigan 52, Nevada 24

Sun Bowl
Central Mich. 24, Wash. State 21

AKRON ZIPS

National Forecast: 125 • MAC East Prediction: 6 • Projected Record: 3-9, 2-6 MAC

OFFENSE Akron has averaged below 20 points per game in each of the past four seasons, which is a recipe for miserable failure in the offense-driven MAC. But an intriguing prospect did emerge at quarterback last fall in DJ Irons. The athletic 6'6", 215-pound junior threw eight touchdown passes and scored twice on the ground before being sidelined by an injury in the fifth game last season.

The Zips return their top three running backs from 2021 in sophomores Jonzell Norrils (118 carries, 573 yards, three TDs), Blake Hester and Anthony Williams Jr. But Akron averaged only 123.2 yards rushing per game and 3.4 yards per carry. Transfer Cam Wiley, the second-leading rusher at Minnesota in 2020, could quickly emerge as the Zips' top rushing threat.

Akron has only one proven pass-catcher returning — sophomore tight end Tristian Brank, a second-team all-conference selection in 2021. The Zips added several intriguing receivers via the transfer route. Sophomore wide receiver Alex Adams played 10 games at LSU over the past two years; senior wideout Shocky Jacques-Louis caught 82 passes for 1,005 yards in 45 games at Pitt; and 6'5" tight end TJ Banks arrives from West Virginia.

All five offensive linemen who started last year's final game are back, and Max Banes should also see action after appearing in 23 games over three seasons at Houston.

DEFENSE Sixteen of Akron's top 18 tacklers from 2021 return, but instant-impact transfers should also bolster every position on defense.

Senior linebacker Bubba Arslanian compiled 43 tackles in Akron's first four games before suffering a season-ending injury. Junior Jeslord Boateng emerged as the defensive leader after Arslanian went down, pacing the team with 80 tackles and 7.5 tackles for a loss. Senior Charles Amankwaa was a playmaker in the secondary last fall, leading the team with three interceptions and nine pass breakups. Power 5 transfers KJ Martin (junior, West Virginia) and Cam Threatt (sophomore, Mississippi State) solidify the secondary.

Transfer help arrives up front, too. Senior Curtis Harper played 33 games at Syracuse (3.0 sacks); senior Victor Jones amassed 72 tackles and 10.5 tackles for a loss in three seasons at Wyoming; and junior Devon Robinson has played for Mississippi State and Memphis.

SPECIALISTS Junior kicker Cory Smigel returns after hitting 6-of-7 field goals from inside 40 yards last season. Sophomore Kyle Romenick handled the punting chores in 2020. Return duties will fall to new candidates.

FINAL ANALYSIS Head coach Joe Moorhead's hiring has been well received. Moorhead sports a 52–25 record as a head coach at Fordham and Mississippi State. He called plays for 2016 Big Ten champion Penn State and 2020 Pac-12 champ Oregon. He was an assistant on Akron's 2005 MAC championship team. While Moorhead gives Akron fans hope for the future, he's going to need time to get things turned around.

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	St. Francis (Pa.)
Sept. 10	at Michigan State
Sept. 17	at Tennessee
Sept. 24	at Liberty
Oct. 1	Bowling Green
Oct. 8	at Ohio
Oct. 15	Central Michigan
Oct. 22	at Kent State
Oct. 29	Miami (Ohio)
Nov. 8	Eastern Michigan
Nov. 19	at Buffalo
Nov. 26	at Northern Illinois

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 2-10, 1-7 MAC

Sept. 4	at Auburn	L	10-60
Sept. 11	Temple	L	24-45
Sept. 18	Bryant	W	35-14
Sept. 25	at Ohio State	L	7-59
Oct. 2	Ohio	L	17-34
Oct. 9	at Bowling Green	W	35-20
Oct. 16	at Miami (Ohio)	L	21-34
Oct. 23	Buffalo	L	10-45
Nov. 2	Ball State	L	25-31
Nov. 9	at Western Michigan	L	40-45
Nov. 20	Kent State	L	0-38
Nov. 27	at Toledo	L	14-49

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	19.8 ppg	12	119
Rushing	123.2 ypg	10	103
Passing	217.5 ypg	7	79
Total	340.8 ypg	10	106

DEFENSE	PER GAME	MAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	39.5 ppg	12	125
Rushing	248.9 ypg	12	128
Passing	220.1 ypg	4	55
Total	469.0 ypg	11	122

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	MAC	NATIONAL
-5	-0.42	9	98

STAT CORNER

0.043

Akron's offense ranked 107th in EPA/play. The offense had only 27 plays of 20-plus yards, 126th nationally. The Zips did show some life in the category of rushing explosiveness, averaging 0.043 EPA per rush, good enough for 56th nationally.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: DJ Irons, 120-78-892-4, 8 TDs
Rushing: Jonzell Norrils, 118 att., 573 yds., 3 TDs
Receiving: Tristian Brank, 25 rec., 269 yds., 3 TDs
Tackles: Jeslord Boateng, 80
Sacks: Jeslord Boateng, Juan Jarrett, 1.5
Interceptions: Charles Amankwaa, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Joe Moorhead
Record at School: First Season
Career Record: 52-25 (6 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Joe Moorhead
Defensive Coordinator: Tim Tibesar
Location: Akron, OH
Stadium: InfoCision Stadium (30,000)

DJ IRONS

Emilee Chinn/Getty Images

> "Obviously Joe [Moorhead] was a big get for them. We have a good idea of the scheme based on the film from his other stops, just not the players."
>
> —An opposing MAC assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Ka'Marii Landers, OT, Dearborn, MI	★★★
2	Bobby Golden, WR, Miami, FL	★★★
3	Keylen Davis, OT, Indianapolis, IN	★★★
4	Marquell Darnell, TE, Erie, PA	★★★
5	Dijon Jennings, QB, Reynoldsburg, OH	★★★
6	Jourden Hale, OT, Cincinnati, OH	★★
7	Bryan McCoy, LB, Joliet, IL	★★
8	Tyhler Williams, OL, Alpharetta, GA	n/r
9	Charles Kellom, RB, Cincinnati, OH	n/r
10	Kiawan Murphy, DL, East Hartford, CT	n/r

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	7	Alex Adams (So.)	13	Oran Singleton Jr. (So.)
WR	18	Shocky Jacques-Louis (Sr.)	81	Shawn Naim (So.)
WR	16	Tony Grimes Jr. (So.)	88	Timothy Scippio (Sr.)
LT	77	Xavior Gray (So.)	74	Ronan Chambers (So.)
LG	**66**	**Ryan Beckman (So.)**	71	Max Banes (Jr.)
C	**65**	**Tony Georges (So.)**	75	Jordan Daniels (So.)
RG	**63**	**Alex Robarge (So.)**	76	Nate Williams (So.)
RT	**73**	**Owen Murphy (So.)**	70	Caleb Herring (So.)
TE	**25**	**Tristian Brank (So.)**	5	TJ Banks (Jr.)
QB	0	DJ Irons (Jr.)	3	Dijon Jennings (Fr.)
RB	**6**	**Jonzell Norrils (So.)**	1	Cam Wiley (So.)

DEFENSE (7)

DE	**3**	**Zach Morton (Sr.)**	99	Devon Robinson (Jr.)
NT	**0**	**Bryce Wilson (Jr.)**	11	Nazir Sy (Jr.)
DE	44	Victor Jones (Sr.)	5	Curtis Harper (Sr.)
ILB	**9**	**Jeslord Boateng (Jr.)**	59	Andrew Behm (So.)
ILB	**27**	**Bubba Arslanian (Sr.)**	24	Brandon Bischof (Sr.)
OLB	25	Tim Terry (Sr.)	21	Reggie Corner Jr. (Jr.)
CB	**12**	**Charles Amankwaa (Sr.)**	29	Jalen Hooks (Sr.)
CB	**23**	**Ronald Jackson Jr. (So.)**	21	Cam Threatt (So.)
ROV	34	Tyson Durant (So.)	2	Corey Thomas, Jr. (So.)
S	15	KJ Martin (Jr.)	39	DiMarco Johnson (So.)
S	**8**	**Jaylen Kelly-Powell (Sr.)**	34	Tyson Durant (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	12	Cory Smigel (Jr.)	**KR**	13	Oran Singleton Jr. (So.)
P	42	Kyle Romenick (So.)	**PR**	12	Charles Amankwaa (Sr.)

BOWLING GREEN FALCONS

National Forecast: 115 • MAC East Prediction: 3 • Projected Record: 4-8, 3-5 MAC

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	at UCLA
Sept. 10	Eastern Kentucky
Sept. 17	Marshall
Sept. 24	at Mississippi State
Oct. 1	at Akron
Oct. 8	Buffalo
Oct. 15	Miami (Ohio)
Oct. 22	at Central Michigan
Nov. 2	Western Michigan
Nov. 9	Kent State
Nov. 15	at Toledo
Nov. 22	at Ohio

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 4-8, 2-6 MAC

Sept. 2	at Tennessee	L	6-38
Sept. 11	South Alabama	L	19-22
Sept. 18	Murray State	W	27-10
Sept. 25	at Minnesota	W	14-10
Oct. 2	at Kent State	L	20-27
Oct. 9	Akron	L	20-35
Oct. 16	at Northern Illinois	L	26-34
Oct. 23	Eastern Michigan	L	24-55
Oct. 30	at Buffalo	W	56-44
Nov. 10	Toledo	L	17-49
Nov. 16	at Miami (Ohio)	L	7-34
Nov. 26	Ohio	W	21-10

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	21.4 ppg	11	109
Rushing	102.0 ypg	12	120
Passing	214.8 ypg	8	82
Total	316.8 ypg	12	117

DEFENSE	PER GAME	MAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	30.7 ppg	9	97
Rushing	187.8 ypg	6	103
Passing	186.2 ypg	1	9
Total	373.9 ypg	4	62

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	MAC	NATIONAL
+2	+0.17	6	50

STAT CORNER

0.342

Bowling Green averaged 0.342 EPA/play on early downs in 2021, 128th in the FBS. The Falcons averaged a meager 32.1 percent offensive success rate on all downs.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Matt McDonald, 393-236-2,555-7, 12 TDs
Rushing: Terion Stewart, 70 att., 412 yds., 5 TDs
Receiving: Austin Osborne, 64 rec., 546 yds., 2 TDs
Tackles: Darren Anders, 124
Sacks: Karl Brooks, 7.5
Interceptions: Jordan Anderson, Deshawn Jones Jr., 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Scot Loeffler
Record at School: 7-22 (3 years)
Career Record: 7-22 (3 years)
Offensive Coordinators: Greg Nosal, Max Warner
Defensive Coordinator: Eric Lewis
Location: Bowling Green, OH
Stadium: Doyt L. Perry Stadium (24,000)

OFFENSE The Falcons have one of the most seasoned quarterbacks in the conference, as Matt McDonald participates in his sixth year of FBS-level football. After two seasons at Boston College, McDonald transferred to Bowling Green when Scot Loeffler, his former BC offensive coordinator, took the head-coaching job with the Falcons. McDonald has made 17 starts for Bowling Green and hit for 12 passing TDs and 2,555 yards through the air last season. McDonald has not thrown an interception over his last 115 pass attempts.

His top receiver on the outside is former Mission Viejo (Calif.) High School teammate and fellow senior Austin Osborne, who transferred to BG from Washington. Osborne led the Falcons last season with 64 receptions and 546 receiving yards, with two scores.

Running back Terion Stewart returns as the top ground threat after rolling up 412 yards in an injury-shortened 2021 season. Stewart has displayed breakaway ability with TD runs of 77 and 62 yards in his career.

The group up front is experienced and led by returning starters Jeremiah Banks-Wall at tackle and Jalen Grant and Cade Zimmerly at guard.

DEFENSE The expectations are hard to hide for this unit, which returns eight starters. The leader is senior end Karl Brooks, who has played in 39 games for the Falcons and was selected third-team All-MAC last season after recording 7.5 sacks, tied for fourth in the conference. Brooks is joined up front by senior end Walter Haire, who has made 35 starts for the Falcons.

The linebacking group is rock-solid, featuring last season's leading tackler in the conference, senior Darren Anders. He was first-team All-MAC after racking up double-figure tackles in seven games and finishing the season with 124 stops. Junior Brock Horne burst onto the scene last year and notched 91 tackles and a pair of sacks in his first starting role.

Safety Jordan Anderson and cornerback Davon Ferguson, a pair of seniors and returning starters, lead the back end of the defense.

SPECIALISTS The faces are fresh here as the Falcons graduated their punter and All-America placekicker Nate Needham. Senior Mason Lawler, who handled the kickoff duties last season, should fill the kicking role, while Aussie Sami Sir takes over the punting duties.

FINAL ANALYSIS This is Year 4 of the major rebuilding work Bowling Green handed to Loeffler when it hired him away from the staff at Boston College. Loeffler is 7–22 three years in, but last season's 4–8 mark included a stunning win at Minnesota, a team that would go 9–4 and place second in the Big Ten West.

The 2022 edition of the Falcons boasts a veteran QB, talent at the skill positions, experience on the offensive line and eight starters back on a unit that turned in Bowling Green's best defensive performance since the Falcons' 2013 MAC championship year. A .500 season is not out of the question.

MATT MCDONALD

David Berding/Getty Images

> "Personnel-wise, they're just not strong enough to run the systems they want to on offense. [Scot Loeffler] being on the hot seat will inform some of their decisions on the field, most likely."
>
> —An opposing MAC assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Davonte Miles, DL, River Rouge, MI	★★★
2	Jalen Holly, WR, River Rouge, MI	★★★
3	John Griffith, QB, Baltimore, MD	★★★
4	Jaylen Jennings, RB, Columbus, OH	★★★
5	Markim McKinnie, RB, Akron, OH	★★★
6	Owen Bainbridge, QB, Stow, OH	★★★
7	Joseph Sipp Jr., LB, Tampa, FL	★★★
8	Darius Lorfils, CB, Germantown, MD	★★★
9	Canaan Williams, CB, Fort Washington, MD	★★★
10	Jalen Huskey, CB, Gaithersburg, MD	★★★

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (9)

WR	**0**	**Tyrone Broden (Jr.)**	85	Cavon Croom (Sr.)
WR	**18**	**Austin Osborne (Sr.)**	1	Odieu Hiliare (Sr.)
LT	**52**	**Jeremiah Banks-Wall (Jr.)**	50	Alex Wollschlaeger (So.)
LG	**77**	**Jalen Grant (Jr.)**	74	Marcelo Mendiola (Jr.)
C	51	Jakari Robinson (Sr.)	54	Matt Fortner (So.)
RG	**72**	**Cade Zimmerly (So.)**	**62**	**Malone VanGorder (So.)**
RT	57	Alex Padgett (Fr.)	50	Alex Wollschlaeger (So.)
TE	**88**	**Christian Sims (Sr.)**	9	Griffin Little (So.)
TE	**10**	**Levi Gazarek (So.)**	89	Andrew Bench (Jr.)
QB	**3**	**Matt McDonald (Sr.)**	12	Camden Orth (Jr.)
RB	4	Terion Stewart (So.)	28	Jaison Patterson (So.)

DEFENSE (8)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	**56**	**Walter Haire (Sr.)**	60	Dontrez Brown (Jr.)
NT	**54**	**Anthony Hawkins (Jr.)**	93	Billie Roberts (So.)
DE	**11**	**Karl Brooks (Sr.)**	33	Jordan Porter (Jr.)
OLB	**9**	**Blaine Spires (Jr.)**	14	Demetrius Hardamon (Sr.)
ILB	**23**	**Darren Anders (Sr.)**	12	JB Brown (Jr.)
ILB	**2**	**Brock Horne (Jr.)**	17	DJ Taylor (Sr.)
OLB	6	Bryce Brand (Sr.)	49	Charles Rosser (So.)
CB	**7**	**Davon Ferguson (Sr.)**	18	Jalen Burton (So.)
CB	4	Deshawn Jones Jr. (So.)	21	Marcus Sheppard (Jr.)
SS	3	Chris Bacon (Sr.)	8	Trent Simms (So.)
FS	**0**	**Jordan Anderson (Sr.)**	32	Patrick Day (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	93	Mason Lawler (Sr.)	**KR**	8	Jhaylin Embry (So.)
P	99	Sami Sir (Fr.)	**PR**	7	Davon Ferguson (Sr.)

BUFFALO BULLS

National Forecast: 121 • MAC East Prediction: 5 • Projected Record: 4-8, 2-6 MAC

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	at Maryland
Sept. 10	Holy Cross
Sept. 17	at Coastal Carolina
Sept. 24	at Eastern Michigan
Oct. 1	Miami (Ohio)
Oct. 8	at Bowling Green
Oct. 15	at UMass
Oct. 22	Toledo
Nov. 1	at Ohio
Nov. 9	at Central Michigan
Nov. 19	Akron
Nov. 26	Kent State

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 4-8, 2-6 MAC

Sept. 2	Wagner	W	69-7
Sept. 11	at Nebraska	L	3-28
Sept. 18	Coastal Carolina	L	25-28
Sept. 25	at Old Dominion	W	35-34
Oct. 2	Western Michigan	L	17-24
Oct. 9	at Kent State	L	38-48
Oct. 16	Ohio	W	27-26
Oct. 23	at Akron	W	45-10
Oct. 30	Bowling Green	L	44-56
Nov. 9	at Miami (Ohio)	L	18-45
Nov. 17	Northern Illinois (ot)	L	27-33
Nov. 23	at Ball State	L	3-20

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	28.8 ppg	8	64
Rushing	195.2 ypg	5	31
Passing	213.5 ypg	9	86
Total	408.8 ypg	7	62

DEFENSE	PER GAME	MAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	29.9 ppg	6	93
Rushing	194.3 ypg	8	109
Passing	221.2 ypg	5	57
Total	415.5 ypg	6	93

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	MAC	NATIONAL
-7	-0.58	11	108

STAT CORNER

0.088

Buffalo ranked 39th in the FBS in rushing efficiency, averaging 0.088 EPA/play. The Bulls ran 7.2 percent more than the average team in 2021.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Matt Myers, 104-57-711-5, 4 TDs
Rushing: Ron Cook Jr., 88 att., 440 yds., 3 TDs
Receiving: Quian Williams, 64 rec., 835 yds., 2 TDs
Tackles: James Patterson, 115
Sacks: Daymond Williams, 6.5
Interceptions: Logic Hudgens, James Patterson, 1

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Maurice Linguist
Record at School: 4-8 (1 year)
Career Record: 4-8 (1 year)
Offensive Coordinator: Shane Montgomery
Defensive Coordinator: Brandon Bailey
Location: Buffalo, NY
Stadium: UB Stadium (25,013)

OFFENSE Cole Snyder transferred home to challenge returning quarterback Matt Myers. Myers has been an effective runner but has struggled with accuracy and reading defenses. Snyder completed 68 percent of his passes in limited action over three seasons at Rutgers.

Versatile back Ron Cook Jr. is positioned to carry a larger load after 1,000-yard rusher Dylan McDuffie transferred to Georgia Tech. Cook averaged 5.0 yards per carry in a change-of-pace role last season. Mike Washington flashed potential in spot duty as a freshman. Al-Jay Henderson will get opportunities after redshirting.

Transfer additions Justin Marshall (Louisville) and Boobie Curry (Arizona) bolster a receiver group that brings back top wideout Quian Williams, a third-team All-MAC selection. Slot receiver Jovany Ruiz-Navarro returns from injury. The former walk-on is the only offensive starter left from the 2020 Camellia Bowl victory. Tight end Trevor Borland elevates from third string.

One starter returns up front — 305-pound Gabe Wallace, who moves from guard to tackle. Alain Schaerer started two games at guard last season. Three other potential starters were lost to the portal, but reinforcements have arrived: Desmond Bessent (San Diego State) at tackle and interior linemen Sidney Walker (Connecticut) and Nick Hartnett (VMI), who was a SoCon all-star. Hartnett will push spring starter Jack Hasz at center.

DEFENSE New coordinator Brandon Bailey has familiarity with head coach Maurice Linguist, having worked as a graduate assistant while Linguist coached the Texas A&M cornerbacks from 2018-19.

Leadership comes from All-MAC linebacker James Patterson, a fifth-year starter and returning captain who averaged 9.6 tackles per game last year. Shaun Dolac backs up Patterson in the middle but will also play outside.

Daymond Williams anchors a veteran front line after leading the Bulls with 6.5 sacks in his first year out of junior college. Max Michel was productive (5.5 TFLs, four sacks) on the edge in eight starts before getting hurt. C.J. Bazile finished strong in '21, and Kyler Laing set a school record with 3.5 sacks in a win at Akron. Late transfer addition Ibrahim Kante (NC State) further enhances the pass-rush rotation.

The secondary has been reinforced by transfers. At cornerback, Caleb Offord came from Notre Dame, while Elijah Blades played for Florida and Texas A&M. Safety Jahmin Muse started 11 games for Boston College in 2020.

SPECIALISTS Cook made third-team All-MAC the past two seasons. He averaged 21 yards on kickoff returns as a junior. Alex McNulty has converted 103 consecutive PATs and set a UB record with a 55-yard field goal.

FINAL ANALYSIS Hired last May, Linguist got a late start in his first season and should benefit from a full offseason program. He recruited the highest-rated class in school history and added more than a dozen portal acquisitions who could accelerate a return to MAC contention.

QUIAN WILLIAMS

AP Photo/Joshua Bessex

> "They had the top-rated signing class because they signed so many players. So there's gonna be a lot of new faces starting for them. They're still very much in transition as a program."
>
> —An opposing MAC assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Devin Grant, ATH, Flushing, NY	★★★
2	Jayden Oliver, CB, Riverview, FL*	★★★
3	Tre Hines, WR, Dublin, CA*	★★★
4	Jaylon Bass, DL, Lineville, AL*	★★★
5	Tavian Mayo, S, Leesburg, GA*	★★★
6	Ja'mori Coard, DL, Sumter, SC	★★★
7	Jackson Paradis, RB, Tilton, NH	★★★
8	Pershaun Fann, LB, Moultrie, GA	★★★
9	Keyshawn Cobb, S, Ft. Valley, GA*	★★★
10	Nik McMillan, WR, Upper Marlboro, MD	★★★

*junior college transfer

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (3)

WR	**3**	**Quian Williams (Sr.)**	0	Khamran Laborn (So.)
WR	1	Justin Marshall (Sr.)	**18**	**Jamari Gassett (So.)**
WR	5	Boobie Curry (Sr.)	87	Jovany Ruiz-Navarro (Sr.)
LT	**69**	**Gabe Wallace (Sr.)**	77	Caelan Shepard (Jr.)
LG	53	Sidney Walker (Sr.)	63	A.J. Urbaniak (So.)
C	62	Jack Hasz (Sr.)		Nick Hartnett (Sr.)
RG	58	Alain Schaerer (Sr.)	78	Tyler Doty (So.)
RT	75	Desmond Bessent (Sr.)	60	Andrew Kerwin (So.)
TE	34	Trevor Borland (Jr.)	21	Robbie Mangas (Sr.)
QB	10	Matt Myers (Sr.)	15	Cole Snyder (So.)
RB	2	Ron Cook Jr. (Sr.)	27	Mike Washington (Fr.)

DEFENSE (6)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	**53**	**C.J. Bazile (Jr.)**	55	Kyler Laing (Jr.)
DT	95	Daymond Williams (Sr.)	20	Daishon Folsom (Jr.)
DT	**90**	**George Wolo (Jr.)**	0	Jaylon Bass (Jr.)
DE	**6**	**Max Michel (Sr.)**	24	Solomanie Bambara (Fr.)
OLB	48	Fabian Weitz (Jr.)	26	Khalil Murdock (Fr.)
MLB	**8**	**James Patterson (Sr.)**	52	Shaun Dolac (Jr.)
OLB	33	Caleb Tate (Jr.)	12	Pershaun Fann (Fr.)
CB	9	Logic Hudgens (Jr.)	**4**	**Isaiah King (Sr.)**
CB	2	Elijah Blades (Sr.)	5	Caleb Offord (Jr.)
SS	11	Jahmin Muse (Sr.)	7	Keyshawn Cobb (Jr.)
FS	**10**	**Marcus Fuqua (Jr.)**	39	Dylan Powell (Sr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	16	Alex McNulty (Sr.)	KR	2	Ron Cook Jr. (Sr.)
P	14	Jackson Baltar (Sr.)	PR	3	Quian Williams (Sr.)

KENT STATE GOLDEN FLASHES

National Forecast: 89 • MAC East Prediction: 2 • Projected Record: 6-6, 5-3 MAC

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	at Washington
Sept. 10	at Oklahoma
Sept. 17	LIU
Sept. 24	at Georgia
Oct. 1	Ohio
Oct. 8	at Miami (Ohio)
Oct. 15	at Toledo
Oct. 22	Akron
Nov. 1	Ball State
Nov. 9	at Bowling Green
Nov. 16	Eastern Michigan
Nov. 26	at Buffalo

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 7-7, 6-2 MAC

Sept. 4	at Texas A&M	L	10-41
Sept. 11	VMI	W	60-10
Sept. 18	at Iowa	L	7-30
Sept. 25	at Maryland	L	16-37
Oct. 2	Bowling Green	W	27-20
Oct. 9	Buffalo	W	48-38
Oct. 16	at Western Michigan	L	31-64
Oct. 23	at Ohio	W	34-27
Nov. 3	Northern Illinois	W	52-47
Nov. 10	at Central Michigan	L	30-54
Nov. 20	at Akron	W	38-0
Nov. 27	Miami (Ohio) (ot)	W	48-47
Dec. 4	vs. Northern Illinois #	L	23-41
Dec. 21	vs. Wyoming %	L	38-52

#Detroit %Famous Idaho Potato Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	33.0 ppg	2	30
Rushing	248.6 ypg	1	3
Passing	246.6 ypg	5	57
Total	495.2 ypg	1	4

DEFENSE	PER GAME	MAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	36.3 ppg	11	121
Rushing	205.9 ypg	10	116
Passing	265.6 ypg	12	116
Total	471.5 ypg	12	124

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	MAC	NATIONAL
+13	+0.93	1	3

STAT CORNER

47.8%

Kent State averaged 6.2 yards per rush in 2021 and posted a 47.8 percent rushing success rate, seventh nationally.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Collin Schlee, 25-18-246-0, 1 TD
Rushing: Marquez Cooper, 241 att., 1,205 yds., 11 TDs
Receiving: Dante Cephas, 82 rec., 1,240 yds., 9 TDs
Tackles: Dean Clark, 117
Sacks: CJ West, 4.0
Interceptions: Montre Miller, 4

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Sean Lewis
Record at School: 19-24 (4 years)
Career Record: 19-24 (4 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Andrew Sowder
Defensive Coordinator: Jeremiah Johnson
Location: Kent, OH
Stadium: Dix Stadium (25,319)

OFFENSE Those expecting the Flashes' offensive output to plummet due to the loss of 2021 MAC Player of the Year quarterback Dustin Crum to graduation may be in for a surprise. Collin Schlee has impressed teammates and coaches with his practice performances while backing up Crum the past two years, and he sported similar dual-threat skills to Crum in limited game action last season. He possesses prototypical dual-threat size (6'3", 218 pounds), a strong arm and tremendous athleticism.

Junior Marquez Cooper (1,205 yards rushing, 11 TDs) and grad student Xavier Williams (812 yards rushing, three TDs) combined to rush for over 2,000 yards last season, while junior Dante Cephas earned first-team All-MAC honors after becoming Kent State's first 1,000-yard receiver since 1997.

The offensive line returns three starters and will be bolstered by Michigan transfer tackle Nolan Rumler and Rutgers transfer guard Kevin Toth.

DEFENSE Jeremiah Johnson takes over Kent State's defensive coordinator duties after leading solid FCS units at Northern Iowa the past nine years.

Safety is a position of strength for the Flashes. Starters Dean Clark (team-leading 117 tackles in 2021) and Nico Bolden (83 tackles, two interceptions) return along with grad students C.J. Holmes and Antwaine Richardson, a transfer from Maryland who suffered a season-ending injury in the second game of 2021. Marshall transfer JoJo Evans (sophomore) also joins the safety mix.

Senior Montre Miller is a returning starter at cornerback. His interception against Miami (Ohio) clinched the 2021 MAC East Division title.

Seven letter-winning linemen return, including graduate student end Zayin West and 330-pound junior tackle CJ West (6.5 tackles for a loss, four sacks). UCLA transfer A.J. Campbell gives the Flashes another intriguing athlete on the edge. The linebacking corps features grad students Marvin Pierre and 274-pound Kesean Gamble, a grad student who missed all of last season due to an injury.

SPECIALISTS Kicker Andrew Glass was solid as a true freshman last year, converting 21-of-28 field goals and all 50 extra points. Punter Josh Smith is also back but was shaky at times as a freshman last fall, averaging just 36.2 yards per boot. Ja'Shaun Poke will return kickoffs after averaging 23.5 yards per return in 2021.

FINAL ANALYSIS Expect Schlee to post huge numbers as a first-year starter in the up-tempo system head coach Sean Lewis has used to wreak havoc in the MAC the past three seasons. Replacing starters on the offensive line is a concern, but it shouldn't keep the Flashes from scoring points in bunches again this fall. In order for the Flashes to become an elite Group of Five program, the defense needs to evolve from a virtual sieve to solid, especially against the run. Kent State also must remain healthy against the most brutal non-conference schedule imaginable.

MARQUEZ COOPER

Kent State Athletics

> "I think the staff does a great job carrying out their offensive identity. I think that making a change at DC will be huge for them. They have a lot of positive energy around that program."
>
> —An opposing MAC assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Devin Kargman, QB, Camden, NJ	★★★
2	Mason Mennell, OL, Stow, OH	★★★
3	Justin Holmes, QB, New Tripoli, PA	★★★
4	Jameel Gardner Jr., WR, Detroit, MI	★★★
5	Oliver Billotte, DL, Clearfield, PA	★★★
6	Gavin Garcia, RB, Catawissa, PA	★★★
7	Nick Bryan, OL, Clairton, PA	★★★
8	Tyler Bivens, CB, Ann Arbor, MI	★★★
9	Stephen Daley, TE, Winchester, VA	★★★
10	John Jackson, DL, Barberton, OH	★★★

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	14	**Dante Cephas (Jr.)**	81	Devontez Walker (So.)
WR	88	Luke Floriea (Jr.)	27	Isaac Vance (Sr.)
WR	25	**Ja'Shaun Poke (Sr.)**	12	Raymond James (Sr.)
LT		Nolan Rumler (Jr.)	56	Elijah Ratliff (Sr.)
LG		Kevin Toth (Jr.)	72	Marcellus Marshall (Jr.)
C	54	**Sam Allan (Sr.)**	66	Elijah Lamptey (Jr.)
RG	65	Jack Bailey (Jr.)	78	Savion Washington (Jr.)
RT	73	**Zach Whaley (Sr.)**	74	Thor Kracht (Jr.)
TE	11	**Kris Leach (Sr.)**	13	Keenan Orr (Sr.)
QB	19	Collin Schlee (Jr.)	17	Griffin Brewster (Jr.)
RB	1	**Marquez Cooper (Jr.)**	2	Xavier Williams (Sr.)

DEFENSE (7)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	55	Sekou Diaby (Sr.)	14	Saivon Taylor-Davis (Sr.)
DT	50	**CJ West (Jr.)**	11	Antoine Cook (Sr.)
DT	53	Adin Huntington (Jr.)	56	Macyo Williams (So.)
DE	0	**Zayin West (Sr.)**		A.J. Campbell (Fr.)
LB	34	**Kesean Gamble (Sr.)**	15	**Matt Harmon (Sr.)**
LB	33	Marvin Pierre (Sr.)	32	Khalib Johns (Sr.)
CB	21	**Montre Miller (Sr.)**	27	Heskin Smith (Sr.)
CB	12	Capone Blue (Sr.)	41	Mario Nunez (Jr.)
S	17	Antwaine Richardson (Sr.)	29	C.J. Holmes (Sr.)
S	3	**Dean Clark (Sr.)**		JoJo Evans (So.)
S	24	**Nico Bolden (Sr.)**		Naijee Jones (Sr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	60	Andrew Glass (So.)	KR	25	Ja'Shaun Poke (Sr.)
P	96	Josh Smith (So.)	PR	20	Daniel Bangura (Sr.)

MIAMI (OHIO) REDHAWKS

National Forecast: 85 • MAC East Prediction: 1 • Projected Record: 7-6, 6-2 MAC

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	at Kentucky
Sept. 10	Robert Morris
Sept. 17	vs. Cincinnati #
Sept. 24	at Northwestern
Oct. 1	at Buffalo
Oct. 8	Kent State
Oct. 15	at Bowling Green
Oct. 22	Western Michigan
Oct. 29	at Akron
Nov. 8	Ohio
Nov. 16	at Northern Illinois
Nov. 22	Ball State

#Paul Brown Stadium

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 7-6, 5-3 MAC

Sept. 4	at Cincinnati	L	14-49
Sept. 11	at Minnesota	L	26-31
Sept. 18	LIU	W	42-7
Sept. 25	at Army	L	10-23
Oct. 2	Central Michigan	W	28-17
Oct. 9	at Eastern Michigan	L	12-13
Oct. 16	Akron	W	34-21
Oct. 23	at Ball State	W	24-17
Nov. 2	at Ohio	L	33-35
Nov. 9	Buffalo	W	45-18
Nov. 16	Bowling Green	W	34-7
Nov. 27	at Kent State (ot)	L	47-48
Dec. 23	vs. North Texas #	W	27-14

#Frisco Football Classic

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	28.9 ppg	7	62
Rushing	144.5 ypg	8	81
Passing	278.6 ypg	1	21
Total	423.1 ypg	6	52

DEFENSE	PER GAME	MAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	23.1 ppg	2	40
Rushing	145.6 ypg	3	56
Passing	223.2 ypg	6	61
Total	368.8 ypg	3	52

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	MAC	NATIONAL
+5	+0.38	4	38

STAT CORNER

0.163

The RedHawks averaged 0.163 EPA/play on early downs, eighth best in the nation.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Brett Gabbert, 299-178-2,648-6, 26 TDs

Rushing: Keyon Mozee, 122 att., 556 yds., 4 TDs

Receiving: Mac Hippenhammer, 48 rec., 786 yds., 5 TDs

Tackles: Matthew Salopek, 112

Sacks: Austin Ertl, 1.5

Interceptions: John Saunders Jr., 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Chuck Martin

Record at School: 39-52 (8 years)

Career Record: 113-59 (14 years)

Offensive Coordinator: Eric Koehler

Defensive Coordinator: Bill Brechin

Location: Oxford, OH

Stadium: Yager Stadium (24,286)

OFFENSE With 26 starts, 41 touchdown passes and more than 5,400 passing yards on his résumé, junior Brett Gabbert gives the RedHawks a solid, proven leader and a bona fide MAC Player of the Year candidate. Gabbert is a former MAC Freshman of the Year and brings a strong pedigree to the field — his older brother is current NFL quarterback Blaine Gabbert.

When the RedHawks run the football, senior Jaylon Bester and junior Tyre Shelton should split the bulk of the carries. Both have extensive experience but have also missed a lot of time with injuries during their careers.

Expect former Penn State wide receiver Mac Hippenhammer to be Gabbert's primary target. He had 48 catches for 786 yards and five touchdowns last season. Senior Jalen Walker is a reliable option with 70 catches over the past four seasons. Nate Muersch has shown the versatility to line up inside or spread out.

The line should be another strong point, with juniors Caleb Shaffer and Rusty Feth leading an experience-rich group. Those two, along with tackles Reid Holskey and Sam Vaughan, started every game last season.

DEFENSE Graduation took a heavy toll up front, so a lot of uncertainty accompanies the lineup. Iowa State transfer Corey Suttle is a likely choice at one of the ends, while sophomore Caiden Woullard is an option at the other end. Junior Austin Ertl and sophomore Anthony Collier should see a lot of time at the tackle positions. Ertl has appeared in 29 games for Miami.

Look for sixth-year senior linebacker Ryan McWood to bounce back from an injury that ended his 2021 season on the second play of the first game. He has 148 tackles in 31 career games. Matt Salopek should join McWood after tallying 112 stops last season, second best on the team.

Jacquez Warren should anchor the secondary from his nickel position. Junior East Carolina transfer Nolan Johnson and former Michigan State Spartan Michael Dowell will also contribute.

SPECIALISTS The punting will be handled by Dom Dzioban, who has averaged better than 40 yards per kick over the past two seasons. Sophomore Graham Nicholson is the leading candidate for the placekicking job. Walker will be the primary punt and kick return specialist for the third straight season.

FINAL ANALYSIS The RedHawks have the personnel and firepower to contend for a MAC East Division title. A lot hinges on the health of Gabbert. There are proven veterans up front, skilled athletes at the receiver positions and adequate depth at running back.

The RedHawks have finished near the top of the MAC in recruiting ratings in the recent era, so there should be ample talent on the defensive side, boosted by a couple of transfers from Power 5 conferences. Ninth-year head coach Chuck Martin saw significant turnover on his staff in the offseason, so there will be an emphasis on bringing the new group together.

BRETT GABBERT

Miami (Ohio) Athletics

"They're going to have replace a bunch of guys who saw a lot of time on the field the last few years. And they're rebuilding that staff, so that's always more uncertain than just roster turnover."

—An opposing MAC assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Joseph Humphreys, QB, Owensboro, KY	★★★
2	Jeffrey Simmons, TE, Fishers, IN	★★★
3	Javon Tracy, ATH, Indianapolis, IN	★★★
4	Malachi Clark, DL, Roseville, MI	★★★
5	Grant Lyons, LB, Cincinnati, OH	★★★
6	Ashton Duncan, DL, Ironton, OH	★★★
7	Eli Coppess, S, Pickerington, OH	★★★
8	Adam Trick, LB, Dayton, OH	★★★
9	Rowan Zolman, S, Kendallville, IN	★★★
10	Joshua Lukusa, Edge, Cincinnati, OH	★★★

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	**8**	**Mac Hippenhammer (Sr.)**	88	Nate Muersch (So.)
WR	14	Jalen Walker (Sr.)	26	Kevin Davis (So.)
WR	25	Devon Dorsey (So.)	83	Angelo Butts (Fr.)
LT	**50**	**Sam Vaughan (So.)**	70	Will Jados (Fr.)
LG	**53**	**Caleb Shaffer (Jr.)**	75	John Brekke (Sr.)
C	**60**	**Rusty Feth (Jr.)**	77	Charlie Nank (Fr.)
RG	59	Kolby Borders (So.)	79	Caleb Siech (Fr.)
RT	**56**	**Reid Holskey (So.)**	72	Ben Jackson (So.)
TE	89	Jack Coldiron (So.)	80	Jack DeJarld (So.)
QB	**5**	**Brett Gabbert (Jr.)**	2	Aveon Smith (Fr.)
RB	1	Jaylon Bester (Sr.)	9	Tyre Shelton (Jr.)

DEFENSE (6)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	11	Corey Suttle (So.)	90	Caiden Woullard (So.)
DT	**92**	**Austin Ertl (Jr.)**	**96**	**Kobe Hilton (So.)**
DT	99	Anthony Collier (So.)	49	Jacob Snell (Fr.)
DE	51	Nasir Washington (Fr.)	34	CJ Ware IV (Fr.)
LB	**15**	**Matthew Salopek (So.)**	4	Camden Rogers (Fr.)
LB	**35**	**Ryan McWood (Sr.)**	10	Ty Wise (So.)
CB	5	John Saunders Jr. (So.)	1	Jaymar Mundy (Fr.)
CB	**24**	**Ja'don Rucker-Furlow (Sr.)**	3	Nolan Johnson (Jr.)
NB	**6**	**Jacquez Warren (So.)**	17	TJ Rush (Fr.)
S	19	Ambe' Caldwell (So.)	21	Michael Dowell (Jr.)
S	16	Eli Blakey (Fr.)	31	Cam Kirk (Fr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	98	Graham Nicholson (So.)	KR	14	Jalen Walker (Sr.)
P	31	Dom Dzioban (So.)	PR	14	Jalen Walker (Sr.)

OHIO BOBCATS

National Forecast: 120 • MAC East Prediction: 4 • Projected Record: 4-8, 3-5 MAC

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Florida Atlantic
Sept. 10	at Penn State
Sept. 17	at Iowa State
Sept. 24	Fordham
Oct. 1	at Kent State
Oct. 8	Akron
Oct. 15	at Western Michigan
Oct. 22	Northern Illinois
Nov. 1	Buffalo
Nov. 8	at Miami (Ohio)
Nov. 15	at Ball State
Nov. 22	Bowling Green

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 3-9, 3-5 MAC

Sept. 4	Syracuse	L	9-29
Sept. 11	Duquesne	L	26-28
Sept. 16	at Louisiana	L	14-49
Sept. 25	at Northwestern	L	6-35
Oct. 2	at Akron	W	34-17
Oct. 9	Central Michigan	L	27-30
Oct. 16	at Buffalo	L	26-27
Oct. 23	Kent State	L	27-34
Nov. 2	Miami (Ohio)	W	35-33
Nov. 9	at Eastern Michigan	W	34-26
Nov. 16	Toledo	L	23-35
Nov. 26	at Bowling Green	L	10-21

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	22.6 ppg	10	105
Rushing	187.3 ypg	6	39
Passing	184.1 ypg	12	108
Total	371.4 ypg	9	87

DEFENSE	PER GAME	MAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	30.3 ppg	8	96
Rushing	193.0 ypg	7	106
Passing	237.8 ypg	8	83
Total	430.8 ypg	8	104

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	MAC	NATIONAL
-7	-0.58	11	108

STAT CORNER

0.139

Ohio's offense was driven by its run game, averaging 0.139 EPA/play (18th overall) and a 43.4 percent success rate (31st in the FBS).

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Kurtis Rourke, 259-169-1,801-7, 11 TDs
Rushing: Kurtis Rourke, 74 att., 327 yds., 3 TDs
Receiving: Tyler Walton, 32 rec., 380 yds., 2 TDs
Tackles: Bryce Houston, 105
Sacks: 3 players tied with 2.0
Interceptions: Tariq Drake, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Tim Albin
Record at School: 3-9 (1 year)
Career Record: 28-17 (4 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Scott Isphording
Defensive Coordinator: Spence Nowinsky
Location: Athens, OH
Stadium: Peden Stadium (24,000)

Daniel Bartel/Icon Sportswire via Getty Images

OFFENSE Junior quarterback Kurtis Rourke is in his fourth year in the system and is the clear-cut starter after sharing the role in 2021. The expectations are high for the Canadian, who played in 10 games last season, completing 169 passes for 1,801 yards and 11 touchdowns.

The running back work should be shared by sophomore Sieh Bangura and senior O'Shaan Allison. Bangura won the starting job in the spring, but Allison has appeared in 27 games over his career and is healthy after being slowed by injuries.

The wide receiver position is a bit thin on experience, but Vanderbilt transfer James Bostic is a 6'3", 217-pound former running back and a force to deal with after the catch. Miles Cross played in all 12 games last season as a true freshman and provides another strong option.

Up front, there has been some shuffling, and the Bobcats are looking to junior left tackle Jay Amburgey, who played on the right side in 2021, to lead the group. Senior Kurt Danneker, an all-conference-caliber player projected to start at left guard, is coming back from an ACL injury that cost him most of last season.

DEFENSE There will be an emphasis on getting to the opposing quarterback when this unit takes the field, and new defensive coordinator Spence Nowinsky has made some changes as he prioritizes that approach. A lot of the load will be fall on the group up front, which includes end Vonnie Watkins, a disruptive force in his fourth year at Ohio who enters the season injury-free after playing in just two games in 2021. Purdue transfer Dontay Hunter II is expected to team with Watkins and lead the charge. Senior tackles Rodney Mathews and Kai Caesar bring more experience to a unit that Albin calls "the strength of our team."

Linebackers Cannon Blauser and Bryce Houston started every game in 2021 and lead a solid group that includes Keye Thompson, a fifth-year player who missed last season due to injury, and Jeremiah Wood, another fifth-year player who missed the bulk of 2021.

Senior corner Justin Birchette has appeared in 27 games for the Bobcats, with 12 starts, and leads the back end along with senior All-MAC safety Tariq Drake.

SPECIALISTS The Bobcats expect to rely on senior Jonah Wieland to handle the punting chores, while junior Tristian Vandenberg needs to work on his consistency to be a reliable option as the placekicker.

FINAL ANALYSIS Tim Albin came into the head-coaching job a year ago with productive offenses spread all across his résumé. He had been the Bobcats' offensive coordinator since 2005 and produced units that rewrote the Ohio record book. Last year, Ohio plunged to 10th in the MAC in scoring, so the pressure is on to get things back on track. Rourke leads an offense with a mostly new receiver group, uncertainty at running back and a reshuffled line. The defense will have to carry this team while those question marks on offense get answered.

KURTIS ROURKE

> "They want to beat you up on the line of scrimmage, but in the last few years, there's been a personnel drop-off on both lines. It's a good staff, but they've struggled as of late."
>
> —An opposing MAC assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Rodney Harris II, WR, Cincinnati, OH	★★★
2	Dontierre Fisher, RB, Checotah, OK	★★★
3	Callum Wither, QB, Mississauga, ON	★★★
4	Mekah Ryder, CB, McKinney, TX	★★★
5	Rayyan Buell, DL, Hornell, NY*	n/r
6	Cedric Hillsman, DL, Booneville, MS*	n/r
7	Jacoby Jones, WR, Senatobia, MS*	n/r
8	Cam McCullum, CB, Scooba, MS*	n/r
9	Tyler Mullins, S, Groveton, GA*	n/r
10	Nathaniel Vakos, K, Avon, OH	n/r

*junior college transfer

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (3)

WR	4	Tyler Walton (Sr.)	15	Philip Cole (Sr.)
WR	85	James Bostic (Sr.)	8	Jacoby Jones (Jr.)
WR	19	Miles Cross (So.)	11	August Pitre III (Jr.)
LT	**53**	**Jay Amburgey (Jr.)**	59	Gary Hoover (Sr.)
LG	72	Kurt Danneker (Sr.)	79	Brody Rodgers (Sr.)
C	66	Christophe Atkinson (Jr.)	**69**	**Parker Titsworth (Jr.)**
RG	76	Hagen Meservy (Sr.)	79	Brody Rodgers (Sr.)
RT	73	Joseph Habinowski (So.)	60	Demond Arter (So.)
TE	86	Tyler Foster (Jr.)	82	Alec Burton (Sr.)
QB	**7**	**Kurtis Rourke (Jr.)**	10	CJ Harris (So.)
RB	22	Sieh Bangura (So.)	0	O'Shaan Allison (Sr.)

DEFENSE (9)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	17	Vonnie Watkins (Sr.)	40	Jack McCrory (Sr.)
DT	**55**	**Rodney Mathews (Sr.)**	9	Kylen McCracken (Sr.)
DT	**50**	**Kai Caesar (Sr.)**	0	Denzel Daxon (Sr.)
DE	6	Dontay Hunter II (So.)	44	Jeremiah Burton (Jr.)
SLB	48	Kyle Kelly (Jr.)	**13**	**John Gregory (Sr.)**
MLB	**33**	**Cannon Blauser (Jr.)**	**38**	**Keye Thompson (Sr.)**
WLB	**32**	**Bryce Houston (Sr.)**	3	Jeremiah Wood (Sr.)
CB	7	Torrie Cox (So.)	4	Roman Parodie (So.)
CB	**8**	**Justin Birchette (Sr.)**	**20**	**Alvin Floyd (Sr.)**
SS	**11**	**Tariq Drake (Sr.)**	29	John Motton (So.)
FS	30	Ben Johnson (Jr.)	20	Alvin Floyd (Sr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	25	Tristian Vandenberg (Jr.)	KR	23	Julian Ross (Sr.)
P	49	Jonah Wieland (Sr.)	PR	7	Torrie Cox Jr. (So.)

BALL STATE CARDINALS

National Forecast: 119 • MAC West Prediction: 6 • Projected Record: 4-8, 2-6 MAC

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	at Tennessee
Sept. 10	Western Michigan
Sept. 17	Murray State
Sept. 24	at Georgia Southern
Oct. 1	Northern Illinois
Oct. 8	at Central Michigan
Oct. 15	UConn
Oct. 22	Eastern Michigan
Nov. 1	at Kent State
Nov. 8	at Toledo
Nov. 15	Ohio
Nov. 22	at Miami (Ohio)

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 6-7, 4-4 MAC

Sept. 2	Western Illinois	W	31-21
Sept. 11	at Penn State	L	13-44
Sept. 18	at Wyoming	L	12-45
Sept. 25	Toledo	L	12-22
Oct. 2	Army	W	28-16
Oct. 9	at Western Michigan	W	45-20
Oct. 16	at Eastern Michigan	W	38-31
Oct. 23	Miami (Ohio)	L	17-24
Nov. 2	at Akron	W	31-25
Nov. 10	at Northern Illinois	L	29-30
Nov. 17	Central Michigan	L	17-37
Nov. 23	Buffalo	W	20-3
Dec. 25	vs. Georgia State #	L	20-51

#Camellia Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	24.1 ppg	9	94
Rushing	130.7 ypg	9	94
Passing	207.6 ypg	10	89
Total	338.3 ypg	11	110

DEFENSE	PER GAME	MAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	28.4 ppg	5	85
Rushing	176.4 ypg	5	95
Passing	243.0 ypg	10	91
Total	419.4 ypg	7	96

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	MAC	NATIONAL
+7	+0.54	2	27

STAT CORNER

7.05

The Cardinals allowed 7.05 yards per passing attempt in 2021, and opponents completed 68.6 percent of passes.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: John Paddock, 26-18-132-1, 0 TDs
Rushing: Carson Steele, 192 att., 891 yds., 6 TDs
Receiving: Jayshon Jackson, 69 rec., 829 yds., 5 TDs
Tackles: Clayton Coll, 108
Sacks: Tavion Woodard, 5.0
Interceptions: Clayton Coll, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Mike Neu
Record at School: 28-41 (6 years)
Career Record: 28-41 (6 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Kevin Lynch
Defensive Coordinator: Tyler Stockton
Location: Muncie, IN
Stadium: Scheumann Stadium (22,500)

OFFENSE The 2022 retrofit for this unit starts with the quarterback position, where three-year starter Drew Plitt has graduated, leaving a void that redshirt senior John Paddock hopes to fill. Paddock has been the backup the past three seasons, but his live experience is limited to just five games, so he will need to make the successful move to starter and leader in rapid fashion.

The running game will lean heavily on sophomore Carson Steele, who had 1,049 all-purpose yards last season as a freshman. Steele is a power runner who does most of his damage on the inside. He shares the load with Will Jones, a grad student who also excels as a blocking back.

The receiving duo of Jayshon Jackson and Yo'Heinz Tyler combined for 118 catches, 1,316 yards and 11 TDs last season, and they provide Paddock with the options the offense needs on the outside. Capable tight end Brady Hunt adds to the passing attack.

The line has a wealth of experience after major injuries in 2021 forced 11 different linemen into game action. Center Ethan Crowe and former Michigan State transfer Damon Kaylor lead the highly experienced group.

DEFENSE The Ball State defense must replace six starters from last season's team that allowed 419.4 yards and 28.4 points per game. Up front, the Cardinals are led by junior end Tavion Woodard, who tallied five sacks in 12 games last season. Look for senior Jack Sape and Kyron Mims to share reps at the other end. The nose tackle role likely goes to senior Justen Ramsey, who has appeared in 27 games over the past three seasons. Ramsey will be spelled by John Harris.

At linebacker, the Cardinals will look for leadership from returning starter Clayton Coll, who has 145 stops in 33 career appearances, and Brandon Martin, the MAC Defensive Player of the Year in 2020 who battled injuries last year and was granted a seventh season of eligibility.

The secondary is led by returning starters Amechi Uzodinma II at corner and Malcolm Lee at safety. Iowa State transfer Jaquan Amos will likely fill the other starting safety spot.

SPECIALISTS The Cardinals face a lot of uncertainty here, with former backup Lucas Borrow expected to take the punting job, while the placekicking role will likely go to Borrow or a walk-on. Jackson is the primary return man.

FINAL ANALYSIS With a new face at quarterback and six new starters on defense, this would appear to be a rebuilding year for Ball State, but head coach Mike Neu just might have enough pieces to challenge for a MAC West crown. The former Ball State QB and MAC Offensive Player of the Year is the ideal mentor for Paddock. With a wealth of experience and depth along the offensive line and proven weapons at the skill positions, the Cardinals should be able to outscore opponents while the defense matures. If the defense comes along before the Cardinals get into the meat of the MAC schedule, Ball State could be the sleeper in the MAC West and make a third straight bowl game.

BALL STATE
33

CARSON STEELE

Chris McDill/Icon Sportswire via Getty Images

> "They give you problems in terms of being really well-coached on offense. They throw out window dressing and then get their best guys open in space."
>
> —An opposing MAC assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Kaden Cobb, QB, Oak Park, IL	★★★
2	Dakari Frazier, DL, Pickerington, OH	★★★
3	Cam Pickett, WR, Chicago, IL	★★★
4	Taran Tyo, OL, Versailles, OH	★★★
5	Jordan Coleman, ATH, St. Louis, MO	★★★
6	Caden Johnson, LB, Lexington, KY	★★★
7	Chris Hood, OT, Kendallville, IN	★★★
8	Max Sullivan, TE, Whiteland, IN	★★★
9	Ashton Carroll, LB, Roanoke, VA	★★★
10	Danny Royster, LB, Indianapolis, IN	★★★

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)

WR	6	**Yo'Heinz Tyler (Sr.)**	10	Derin McCulley (Jr.)
WR	12	**Jayshon Jackson (Sr.)**	25	Dean Tate (Sr.)
LT	75	**Corey Stewart (So.)**	74	Porter Haught (Jr.)
LG	55	**Damon Kaylor (Jr.)**	50	Seth Schmidt (Jr.)
C	54	**Ethan Crowe (So.)**	65	Matt Phillips (Jr.)
RG	53	**Jaylen Turner (Sr.)**	71	Kevin Meeder (So.)
RT	79	**Joseph Boggs (Sr.)**	63	Tommy Lorincz (So.)
TE	80	Brady Hunt (So.)	48	Isaiah Dunnuck (Sr.)
QB	5	John Paddock (Sr.)	18	Kiael Kelly (So.)
RB	33	**Carson Steele (So.)**	24	Will Jones (Sr.)
FB	81	Ryan Lezon (So.)	87	Casey Coll (Sr.)

DEFENSE (5)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	52	**Tavion Woodard (Jr.)**	54	Kyle King (So.)
NT	98	**Justen Ramsey (Sr.)**	97	John Harris (Jr.)
DE	94	Jack Sape (Sr.)	93	Kyron Mims (Jr.)
OLB	51	Brandon Berger (So.)	36	Sidney Houston Jr. (Jr.)
ILB	32	**Clayton Coll (Sr.)**	56	Joey Stemler (So.)
ILB	7	Brandon Martin (Sr.)	40	Cole Pearce (Sr.)
OLB	25	Keionté Newson (Jr.)	55	Dalton Elrod (So.)
CB	1	Nic Jones (Sr.)	15	Tyler "Red" Potts (Sr.)
CB	3	**Amechi Uzodinma II (Sr.)**	12	Thailand Baldwin (So.)
SS	16	Jaquan Amos (Sr.)	22	Jack Blanco (Sr.)
FS	2	**Malcolm Lee (Sr.)**	18	Jordan Riley-Scott (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	15	Lucas Borrow (So.)	**KR**	12	Jayshon Jackson (Sr.)
P	15	Lucas Borrow (So.)	**PR**	12	Jayshon Jackson (Sr.)

CENTRAL MICHIGAN CHIPPEWAS

National Forecast: 91 • MAC West Prediction: 3 • Projected Record: 7-5, 5-3 MAC

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	at Oklahoma State
Sept. 10	South Alabama
Sept. 17	Bucknell
Sept. 24	at Penn State
Oct. 1	at Toledo
Oct. 8	Ball State
Oct. 15	at Akron
Oct. 22	Bowling Green
Nov. 2	at Northern Illinois
Nov. 9	Buffalo
Nov. 16	Western Michigan
Nov. 25	at Eastern Michigan

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 9-4, 6-2 MAC

Sept. 4	at Missouri	L	24-34
Sept. 11	Robert Morris	W	45-0
Sept. 18	at LSU	L	21-49
Sept. 25	FIU	W	31-27
Oct. 2	at Miami (Ohio)	L	17-28
Oct. 9	at Ohio	W	30-27
Oct. 16	Toledo (ot)	W	26-23
Oct. 23	Northern Illinois	L	38-39
Nov. 3	at Western Michigan	W	42-30
Nov. 10	Kent State	W	54-30
Nov. 17	at Ball State	W	37-17
Nov. 26	Eastern Michigan	W	31-10
Dec. 31	vs. Wash. State #	W	24-21

#Sun Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	32.3 ppg	4	35
Rushing	178.0 ypg	7	51
Passing	265.4 ypg	2	29
Total	443.4 ypg	3	24

DEFENSE	PER GAME	MAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	25.8 ppg	3	60
Rushing	118.5 ypg	1	18
Passing	263.3 ypg	11	112
Total	381.8 ypg	5	67

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	MAC	NATIONAL
+1	+0.08	7	64

STAT CORNER

34.4%

Central Michigan held opponents to a 34.4 percent success rate on third downs, ninth in the nation.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Daniel Richardson, 316-191-2,633-6, 24 TDs
Rushing: Lew Nichols III, 341 att., 1,848 yds., 16 TDs
Receiving: Dallas Dixon, 45 rec., 701 yds., 8 TDs
Tackles: Donte Kent, 54
Sacks: John Wesley Whiteside, 6.5
Interceptions: Donte Kent, 1

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Jim McElwain
Record at School: 20-13 (3 years)
Career Record: 64-40 (8+ years)
Offensive Coordinator: Paul Petrino
Defensive Coordinator: Robb Akey
Location: Mount Pleasant, MI
Stadium: Kelly/Shorts Stadium (30,255)

OFFENSE Lew Nichols III has a tough act to follow after leading the nation in rushing last year with 1,848 yards and 16 touchdowns on 341 carries. He likely will not need to carry nearly as much of the load, as Kobe Lewis is back after missing the entirety of 2021 with a knee injury. Lewis was a 1,000-yard rusher in 2019 before splitting time with Nichols in 2020. The twosome gives CMU the top running back duo in the MAC.

Daniel Richardson (191-of-316, 2,633, 24 TDs, six INTs) began last year as the backup but eventually entrenched himself as the starter following a 2020 season in which he started four out of six games. Richardson will have to deal with the departure of leading receiver Kalil Pimpleton. His top two returning targets will likely be Dallas Dixon (45 catches, 701 yards, eight TDs) and tight end Joel Wilson (31 receptions, 367 yards, six TDs).

The biggest obstacle in addition to replacing the production of Pimpleton is finding new bodies at both tackle spots after the Chippewas lost a pair of first-team All-MAC performers to graduation.

DEFENSE The transfer portal was not kind to Central Michigan, as five key contributors over the last couple seasons have left the program. Gone are the five leading tacklers from 2021, with cornerback Donte Kent (54 tackles, 14 pass breakups) the leader among returners in that department. Kent and Rolliann Sturkey (36 tackles, four breakups) will hold down the fort in the secondary on the outside, while linebackers Justin Whiteside (28 tackles, 7.5 TFLs) and Kyle Moretti (47 tackles, four TFLs) will be tasked with carrying over what they learned during extensive action in 13 games as freshmen.

Arguably the biggest strength is the depth in the interior of the defensive line. Robi Stuart is back as a three-year starter after missing the entirety of 2021. He will be joined by the likes of John Wesley Whiteside (6.5 sacks), Jacques Bristol (36 tackles, 5.5 TFLs) and Tyrece Woods Jr. (19 tackles, four TFLs). All four are capable starters and give the Chippewas versatility in their rotation.

SPECIALISTS Both punter Luke Elzinga (41.3 yards per punt) and kicker Marshall Meeder (17-of-26 on field goals, 3-of-4 from over 50 yards) are unlikely to be challenged for their spots. Lewis, back from injury, will give CMU a spark in the kick return game, but the dynamic Pimpleton (19 yards per punt return, two TDs) leaves a massive void to fill.

FINAL ANALYSIS It is easy to focus on all the important losses to graduation and the transfer portal, but with such a talented running back tandem plus a tested quarterback keying the offense, there should be enough firepower to keep the Chippewas churning. Head coach Jim McElwain has proved adept in recruiting and finding capable replacements in previous years, and that will have to be the case again on both sides of the ball. If CMU can figure it out again defensively, it has a solid chance to return to its perch atop the MAC West.

LEW NICHOLS III

Michael Allio/Icon Sportswire via Getty Images

> "They're always tough and physical. They do a good job controlling the line of scrimmage, get you sleepy with that and go right over your head."
>
> —An opposing MAC assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Bert Emanuel Jr., QB, Missouri City, TX	★★★
2	Jordan Kwiatkowski, LB, Sterling Heights, MI	★★★
3	Kade Kostus, DL, Rockford, MI	★★★
4	Ambrose Wilson, ATH, East Lansing, MI	★★★
5	Martin Koivisto, OL, Shakopee, MN	★★★
6	Jordan Ramsey, RB, Sterling Heights, MI	★★★
7	Brady Ploucha, OT, Dearborn, MI	★★★
8	Matteo Carriere, WR, Alpharetta, GA	★★★
9	DeCorion Temple, TE, West Bloomfield, MI	★★★
10	Oumar Conde, Edge, Myrtle Beach, SC*	★★★

*junior college transfer

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

WR	6	**Dallas Dixon (Sr.)**	18	Alec Ward (So.)
WR	89	Javon Gantt (So.)	13	Chris Parker (Fr.)
WR	84	Kenny Brewer III (So.)	23	Irone Jackson (So.)
LT	75	Davis Heinzen (Fr.)	73	Bruno Guberinich (Fr.)
LG	66	**Tyden Ferris (Jr.)**	65	**Deiyantei Powell-Woods (Jr.)**
C	50	**Jamezz Kimbrough (Sr.)**	77	Keegan Smith (So.)
RG	72	Cade Klimczak (So.)	55	Braden Doyle (So.)
RT	78	Vashon Bailey (So.)	68	Brayden Swartout (So.)
TE	83	**Joel Wilson (Jr.)**	33	Jayden Evans (So.)
QB	10	**Daniel Richardson (So.)**	12	Tyler Pape (Fr.)
RB	7	**Lew Nichols III (So.)**	4	Kobe Lewis (Jr.)

DEFENSE (4)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	11	LaQuan Johnson Jr. (Jr.)	98	Fred Stokes (So.)
DT	71	**Robi Stuart (Sr.)**	99	Quindario Lee (Fr.)
DT	79	John Wesley Whiteside (Sr.)	56	Tyrece Woods Jr. (Jr.)
DE	9	Thomas Incoom (Sr.)	10	**Jacques Bristol (Jr.)**
LB	41	Cory Gildersleeve Jr. (So.)	39	Ke'Shon Parker (So.
LB	45	Justin Whiteside (So.)	18	Ormondell Dingle (So.)
LB	22	Kyle Moretti (So.)	32	Nick Apsey (Jr.)
CB	37	**Rolliann Sturkey (Sr.)**	21	Elijah Rikard (Fr.)
CB	19	**Donte Kent (So.)**	21	Elijah Rikard (Fr.)
S	29	Trey Jones (So.)	15	Caleb Spann (Fr.)
S	16	Nahree Biggins (Fr.)	26	Zion Fitzpatrick (Sr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	64	Marshall Meeder (So.)	KR	4	Kobe Lewis (Jr.)
P	28	Luke Elzinga (So.)	PR	81	Ke'Andre Collins (Fr.)

EASTERN MICHIGAN EAGLES

National Forecast: 113 • MAC West Prediction: 5 • Projected Record: 5-7, 3-5 MAC

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	Eastern Kentucky
Sept. 10	at Louisiana
Sept. 17	at Arizona State
Sept. 24	Buffalo
Oct. 1	UMass
Oct. 8	at Western Michigan
Oct. 15	Northern Illinois
Oct. 22	at Ball State
Oct. 29	Toledo
Nov. 8	at Akron
Nov. 16	at Kent State
Nov. 25	Central Michigan

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 7-6, 4-4 MAC

Sept. 3	St. Francis (Pa.)	W	35-15
Sept. 11	at Wisconsin	L	7-34
Sept. 18	at UMass	W	42-28
Sept. 25	Texas State	W	59-21
Oct. 2	at No. Illinois	L	20-27
Oct. 9	Miami (Ohio)	W	13-12
Oct. 16	Ball State	L	31-38
Oct. 23	at Bowling Green	W	55-24
Nov. 2	at Toledo	W	52-49
Nov. 9	Ohio	L	26-34
Nov. 16	Western Michigan	W	22-21
Nov. 26	at Central Michigan	L	10-31
Dec. 18	vs. Liberty #	L	20-56

#LendingTree Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	30.2 ppg	6	51
Rushing	117.9 ypg	11	112
Passing	262.8 ypg	3	34
Total	380.8 ypg	8	79
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**MAC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	30.0 ppg	7	94
Rushing	197.7 ypg	9	113
Passing	237.8 ypg	7	82
Total	435.5 ypg	9	107
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**MAC**	**NATIONAL**
+4	+0.31	5	40

STAT CORNER

44.0%

Eastern Michigan posted the 27th-most efficient passing offense, averaging a 44.0 percent success rate and 11.1 yards per completion.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Samson Evans, 4-4-43-0, 3 TDs
Rushing: Darius Boone Jr., 120 att., 451 yds., 6 TDs
Receiving: Hassan Beydoun, 97 rec., 1,015 yds., 4 TDs
Tackles: Tariq Speights, 92
Sacks: Jose Ramirez, 6.5
Interceptions: Russell Vaden IV, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Chris Creighton
Record at School: 37-57 (8 years)
Career Record: 173-103 (25 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Chris Creighton
Defensive Coordinator: Neal Neathery
Location: Ypsilanti, MI

OFFENSE Questions arise at the most important of positions, as EMU has a total of one pass attempted among its returning group of quarterbacks. That does not mean that the Eagles did not prepare for the situation, as they brought in senior Taylor Powell through the transfer portal. Powell has experience playing at Missouri (35-of-76, 431 yards, one TD, two INTs) in 2018 and '19 and Troy in 2021 (125-of-189, 1,251 yards, seven TDs, six INTs). There will be a battle this fall for the No. 1 spot, and if Powell proves incapable, an underclassmen group including Austin Smith is eager to prove ready for the role.

The good news is that Eastern Michigan returns its top four pass-catchers from 2021, with the dynamic and sure-handed Hassan Beydoun looking for a second straight 1,000-yard receiving year.

The Eagles will need to improve a pedestrian run game and fill a couple holes on the interior of the offensive line in order to reach their offensive peak. Darius Boone Jr. and Samson Evans, the top two returning running backs, both averaged an underwhelming 3.8 yards per carry, so there is plenty of room for an upswing.

DEFENSE The last time we saw EMU, they were getting torched to the tune of eight touchdowns in a 56–20 loss to Liberty in the LendingTree Bowl. The good news is that top pass rusher Jose Ramirez (6.5 sacks, 12 TFLs) and leading tackler Tariq Speights (92 stops) return, and the secondary brings back a slew of names who were valuable contributors. Russell Vaden IV could be a name to watch after showing a knack for finding the football with three interceptions in only eight games played.

Eagles defensive coordinator Neal Neathery, who has been on staff since 2016, oversaw a group that forced 17 turnovers in 2021 while returning three of them for touchdowns. Considering that 15 of those takeaways led to scores (11 TDs, four FGs), bettering that number this year could be a key to success.

SPECIALISTS The Eagles will likely turn to a freshman field-goal kicker in Jesús Gómez, who was highly regarded by many recruiting databases. Figuring out a replacement for reliable punter Jake Julien (45.9 average) is of the utmost importance. Both Julien and Chad Ryland (19-of-22 on field goals) were All-MAC second-teamers, leaving significant shoes to fill. Beydoun handled the bulk of returns as a junior and could once again be inserted into that role as a multifaceted contributor.

FINAL ANALYSIS Sustained success in Ypsilanti is as hard of a task as anywhere in college football, and Chris Creighton has done a respectable job, winning at least six games in four of his eight seasons. On the downside, his squads have gone 0–4 in their bowl games. While the MAC title is one goal that has eluded Creighton and Co. thus far, simply qualifying for another postseason game and ending the season with a bowl victory would be a huge boost in establishing a winning formula at "The Factory."

HASSAN BEYDOUN

AP Photo/Carlos Osorio

> "They're really in on the blue-collar thing. The facilities have drastically improved under this staff. They're the chip-on-their-shoulder program in this league. Defensively they like to play aggressively, but they're still disciplined."
>
> —An opposing MAC assistant coach

TOP 7 RECRUITS

1	Maliek Bogard, Edge, Beggs, OK	★★★
2	Joshua Anderson, OL, St. Louis, MO	★★★
3	Elijah Jackson-Anderson, RB, Grand Blanc, MI	★★★
4	Max Reese, TE, Oak Park, IL	★★★
5	Mack Indestad, OT, Lemont, IL	★★★
6	Joshua Scott, CB, Antioch, CA*	★★★
7	Darius Lassiter, WR, El Dorado, KS*	n/r

*junior college transfer

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (9)				
WR	**4**	**Hassan Beydoun (Sr.)**	5	Dennis Smith (Sr.)
WR	**24**	**Tanner Knue (Jr.)**	11	I'Shawn Stewart (Sr.)
WR	**1**	**Dylan Drummond (Sr.)**	84	Zach Westmoreland (So.)
LT	**71**	**Marcellus Johnson (Jr.)**	61	Zackariah Kadri (Sr.)
LG	**62**	**Sidy Sow (Sr.)**	68	Alex Howie (Jr.)
C	**76**	**Richard Bates Jr. (Sr.)**	63	Mickey Rewolinski (So.)
RG	70	Dimitri Douglas (Jr.)	**69**	**Jake Donnellon (Sr.)**
RT	**77**	**Brian Dooley (Jr.)**	73	Coleon Smith (So.)
TE	82	Gunnar Oakes (Sr.)	3	Aaron Jackson (Jr.)
QB	7	Taylor Powell (Sr.)	19	Austin Smith (So.)
RB	**27**	**Darius Boone Jr. (So.)**	22	Samson Evans (Jr.)
DEFENSE (5)				Returning Starters in **BOLD**
DE	97	Mikey Haney (Jr.)	90	Grant Trueman (Sr.)
NT	93	Jordan Crawford (Sr.)	94	Peyton Price (So.)
DT	**92**	**Alex Merritt (So.)**	95	Mikah Coleman (So.)
DE	**55**	**Jose Ramirez (Jr.)**	91	Dexter Manior (So.)
LB	20	EJ Williams (Jr.)	19	Joe Sparacio (Sr.)
LB	**10**	**Tariq Speights (Sr.)**	41	Justin Jefferson (So.)
CB	**29**	**Kempton Shine (So.)**	14	Corry Thomas Jr. (So.)
CB	**8**	**T.J. Peavy (So.)**	17	Mark Lee Jr. (So.)
S	13	Russell Vaden IV (Sr.)	27	David Carter Jr. (So.)
S	23	Blake Bogan (Sr.)	3	Brandon Benson (Sr.)
S	21	Robert Daniel Jr. (Jr.)	33	Rashaad Jenkins (Sr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	35	Jesús Gómez (Fr.)	**KR**	4	Hassan Beydoun (Sr.)
P	39	Adam Heston (So.)	**PR**	4	Hassan Beydoun (Sr.)

NORTHERN ILLINOIS HUSKIES

National Forecast: 76 • MAC West Prediction: 1 • Projected Record: 8-5, 6-2 MAC

OFFENSE After transferring from Michigan State, Rocky Lombardi galvanized the NIU offense with his leadership, experience and steady play. The senior quarterback has had a dramatic impact on the program, passing for 2,597 yards and 15 touchdowns with just eight interceptions to lead the Huskies to the MAC title.

The Huskies have a wealth of talented quarterbacks, including redshirt freshman Ethan Hampton and Temple transfer Justin Lynch, the younger brother of former NIU star quarterback Jordan Lynch, who led the Huskies to the 2013 Orange Bowl.

Lombardi won't have the luxury of handing the ball off to Jay Ducker. The 2021 MAC Freshman of the Year transferred to Memphis in January. The ground game could get a spark from the sophomore trio of Harrison Waylee, Antario Brown and Mason Blakemore.

Northern Illinois head coach Thomas Hammock expects the offensive line to be one of the strengths of the team due to added depth — up to 10 quality players. Four starters are back, including the entire left side in tackle Marques Cox and guard J.J. Lippe.

Several talented options return at wide receiver, led by Trayvon Rudolph and Cole Tucker. Rudolph, who caught 14 passes for 309 yards and three TDs vs. Kent State, is a game-changer on offense and special teams.

DEFENSE The defense is set to take a big step this season, in particular up front. The 4-3 defense is led by returning defensive end Raishein Thomas and interior linemen Demond Taylor Jr. and James Ester. Physical toughness and strength was an issue that the coaching staff addressed in the offseason.

The linebacker spot will make a jump in athleticism, aided by the return of injured middle linebacker Kyle Pugh to go with Nick Rattin, Jaden Dolphin and Makhi Nelson-Douglas.

NIU is solid in the secondary with junior cornerback Jordan Gandy headlining a talented group that includes Eric Rogers and JaVaughn Byrd. At safety, Devin Lafayette, CJ Brown and Louis Frye are among the returnees.

SPECIALISTS Junior John Richardson is a clutch performer and one of the top kickers in the conference. The loss of punter Matt Ference is a blow, but Minnesota transfer Tom Foley is the most likely successor. Rudolph, a second-team all-conference player at kickoff returner and wide receiver, is an explosive threat. Tucker and FIU transfer Shemar Thornton are set to battle for punt return duties.

FINAL ANALYSIS The Huskies are aiming for another magical season. That might happen again with a deeper and more balanced team. Lombardi headlines an experienced offense, and the Huskies are talented in the trenches. The schedule shapes up nicely for another push toward the end of the regular season, with three of NIU's final four games at home. If it can overcome the transfer of Ducker and get another breakout player on offense, NIU could be making another appearance in Detroit.

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Eastern Illinois
Sept. 10	at Tulsa
Sept. 17	Vanderbilt
Sept. 24	at Kentucky
Oct. 1	at Ball State
Oct. 8	Toledo
Oct. 15	at Eastern Michigan
Oct. 22	at Ohio
Nov. 2	Central Michigan
Nov. 9	at Western Michigan
Nov. 16	Miami (Ohio)
Nov. 26	Akron

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 9-5, 6-2 MAC

Sept. 4	at Georgia Tech	W	22-21
Sept. 11	Wyoming	L	43-50
Sept. 18	at Michigan	L	10-63
Sept. 25	Maine	W	41-14
Oct. 2	Eastern Michigan	W	27-20
Oct. 9	at Toledo	W	22-20
Oct. 16	Bowling Green	W	34-26
Oct. 23	at Central Michigan	W	39-38
Nov. 3	at Kent State	L	47-52
Nov. 10	Ball State	W	30-29
Nov. 17	at Buffalo (ot)	W	33-27
Nov. 23	Western Michigan	L	31-42
Dec. 4	vs. Kent State #	W	41-23
Dec. 17	vs. Coastal Carolina %	L	41-47

#Detroit %Cure Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	32.2 ppg	5	36
Rushing	241.4 ypg	2	4
Passing	187.4 ypg	11	105
Total	428.7 ypg	5	44
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**MAC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	33.7 ppg	10	112
Rushing	214.4 ypg	11	120
Passing	238.0 ypg	9	84
Total	452.4 ypg	10	115
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**MAC**	**NATIONAL**
-6	-0.43	10	103

STAT CORNER

59.8%

Northern Illinois generated quality possessions on 79 of its 132 non-garbage drives in 2021, a 59.8 percent rate, ranking seventh in the FBS.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Rocky Lombardi, 343-200-2,597-8, 15 TDs
Rushing: Harrison Waylee, 101 att., 574 yds., 4 TDs
Receiving: Trayvon Rudolph, 51 rec., 892 yds., 7 TDs
Tackles: CJ Brown, 109
Sacks: Devonte O'Malley, 4.0
Interceptions: CJ Brown, Jaden Dolphin, 1

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Thomas Hammock
Record at School: 14-18 (3 years)
Career Record: 14-18 (3 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Eric Eidsness
Defensive Coordinator: Derrick Jackson
Location: DeKalb, IL
Stadium: Huskie Stadium (24,000)

TRAYVON RUDOLPH

Steven King/Icon Sportswire via Getty Images

> "Can't argue with the success they had last year. They're big on both sides of the ball. They're not the most athletic roster, but the size and length stand out vs. the rest of us."
>
> —An opposing MAC assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Jaiden Credle, RB, Columbus, GA	★★★
2	Jake Gassaway, LB, Omaha, NE	★★★
3	Terron Kellman, RB, Baltimore, MD	★★★
4	Reggie Jean, DL, Winter Garden, FL	★★★
5	Trey Porter, ATH, Ankeny, IA	★★★
6	Nick Alvarado, S, Union City, NJ	★★★
7	Jacob Finley, CB, Hoover, AL	★★★
8	Roy Williams, DL, Palos Heights, IL	★★★
9	Abiathar Curry, OT, Janesville, WI	★★★
10	Zeke Williams, ATH, Naperville, IL	★★★

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	15	Cole Tucker (Sr.)	1	Shemar Thornton (Sr.)
WR	9	Mohamed Toure (So.)	86	Trey Urwiler (Fr.)
WR	85	Trayvon Rudolph (So.)	0	Fabian McCray (So.)
LT	**70**	**Marques Cox (Jr.)**	60	Evan Buss (So.)
LG	**79**	**J.J. Lippe (So.)**	76	John Champe (So.)
C	50	Pete Nygra (Fr.)	64	Matthew Schooley (So.)
RG	**65**	**Logan Zschernitz (So.)**	74	Tyler Pitcel (Fr.)
RT	**69**	**Nolan Potter (So.)**	71	Drew Hoth (Fr.)
TE	80	Miles Joiner (Sr.)	82	Tristen Tewes (So.)
QB	**12**	**Rocky Lombardi (Sr.)**	5	Justin Lynch (So.)
RB	**30**	**Harrison Waylee (So.)**	1	Antario Brown (So.)

DEFENSE (11) Returning Starters in BOLD

DE	**4**	**Raishein Thomas (So.)**	15	Izayah Green-May (Sr.)
NT	**1**	**James Ester (So.)**	51	Cade Haberman (So.)
DT	**10**	**Demond Taylor Jr. (So.)**	**95**	**Devonte O'Malley (So.)**
DE	99	Pierce Oppong (So.)	**5**	**Michael Kennedy (Sr.)**
OLB	**38**	**Nick Rattin (So.)**	9	Daveren Rayner (Fr.)
MLB	**11**	**Kyle Pugh (Sr.)**	45	Makhi Nelson-Douglas (So.)
OLB	26	Jaden Dolphin (So.)	18	Elijah Hamm (Fr.)
CB	**2**	**JaVaughn Byrd (So.)**	12	Eric Rogers (So.)
CB	**14**	**Jordan Gandy (Jr.)**	22	Cyrus McGarrell (Fr.)
S	**3**	**Devin Lafayette (Fr.)**	21	Muhammed Jammeh (Fr.)
S	**6**	**CJ Brown (So.)**	17	Louis Frye (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	39	John Richardson (Jr.)	KR	85	Trayvon Rudolph (So.)
P	98	Tom Foley (So.)	PR	15	Cole Tucker (Sr.)

TOLEDO ROCKETS

National Forecast: 78 • MAC West Prediction: 2 • Projected Record: 8-4, 6-2 MAC

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	LIU
Sept. 10	UMass
Sept. 17	at Ohio State
Sept. 24	at San Diego State
Oct. 1	Central Michigan
Oct. 8	at Northern Illinois
Oct. 15	Kent State
Oct. 22	at Buffalo
Oct. 29	at Eastern Michigan
Nov. 8	Ball State
Nov. 15	Bowling Green
Nov. 25	at Western Michigan

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 7-6, 5-3 MAC

Sept. 4	Norfolk State	W	49-10
Sept. 11	at Notre Dame	L	29-32
Sept. 18	Colorado State	L	6-22
Sept. 25	at Ball State	W	22-12
Oct. 2	at UMass	W	45-7
Oct. 9	Northern Illinois	L	20-22
Oct. 16	at Central Michigan (ot)	L	23-26
Oct. 23	Western Michigan	W	34-15
Nov. 2	Eastern Michigan	L	49-52
Nov. 10	at Bowling Green	W	49-17
Nov. 16	at Ohio	W	35-23
Nov. 27	Akron	W	49-14
Dec. 17	vs. Middle Tennessee #	L	24-31

#Bahamas Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	33.4 ppg	1	26
Rushing	196.2 ypg	4	30
Passing	239.1 ypg	6	61
Total	435.2 ypg	4	37

DEFENSE	PER GAME	MAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	21.8 ppg	1	27
Rushing	151.5 ypg	4	64
Passing	198.2 ypg	3	22
Total	349.7 ypg	2	36

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	MAC	NATIONAL
+7	+0.54	2	27

STAT CORNER

0.350

Toledo's rushing offense was 0.350 EPA/play better than its passing offense. The Rockets ranked first in the nation in EPA/rush (0.242) and 110th in EPA/pass (-0.108).

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Dequan Finn, 250-144-2,071-2, 18 TDs
Rushing: Dequan Finn, 112 att., 505 yds., 9 TDs
Receiving: Devin Maddox, 41 rec., 567 yds., 4 TDs
Tackles: Maxen Hook, 95
Sacks: Jamal Hines, 10.0
Interceptions: Chris McDonald, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Jason Candle
Record at School: 45-27 (6+ years)
Career Record: 45-27 (6+ years)
Offensive Coordinators: Mike Hallett, Robert Weiner
Defensive Coordinator: Vince Kehres
Location: Toledo, OH
Stadium: Glass Bowl (26,038)

OFFENSE After leading the conference in scoring (33.4 ppg), the Rockets again are loaded on this side of the ball, led by sophomore quarterback Dequan Finn, who threw for 18 TDs and ran for nine more in 2021, with just two interceptions. And his supporting cast is formidable.

Finn's protection is anchored by four returning starters along the line, led by senior tackle Mitchell Berg and junior guard/center Tyler Long. That duo helped Toledo average nearly 200 rushing yards per game last season. Sophomore guard Nick Rosi, an all-conference performer in 2019, returns after missing last season due to injury. Junior tackle Lavel Dumont made seven starts a year ago, while sophomore Vinny Sciury made six starts at guard.

First-team All-MAC running back Bryant Koback opted to depart for the NFL, so Micah Kelly and Jacquez Stuart should share the bulk of the carries. The receiver group is led by junior Devin Maddox, who caught 41 passes for 567 yards and four TDs in 2021. Matt Landers, who led the Rockets with a team-best 25.7 yards per catch, has transferred, opening the way for Jerjuan Newton to take on more of the load in the passing game.

DEFENSE Toledo's defense ranked first in the MAC in points allowed (21.8) and was second in total defense (349.7 ypg). The Rockets could surpass that effort this time around, bolstered by five all-conference players.

Up front, two-time All-MAC defensive end Desjuan Johnson leads the group after registering 70 tackles, 12.5 TFLs and 4.5 sacks last year. At outside linebacker, three-time All-MAC Jamal Hines headlines a deep group. Hines had 88 tackles, 15.0 TFLs and 10 sacks in 2021 and joins fellow senior Dyontae Johnson, who had 86 tackles and 8.0 TFLs, earning third-team All-MAC honors in 2021.

In the secondary, sophomore safety Maxen Hook and junior nickel Nate Bauer return with all-conference honors to their credit. Hook had 95 tackles as a freshman in 2021, while Bauer had 55 tackles and 6.5 TFLs. The corners should be sophomore Quinyon Mitchell, who started every game a year ago, along with junior Chris McDonald.

SPECIALISTS Junior placekicker Thomas Cluckey returns, but five-year starter Bailey Flint must be replaced at punter. The leading candidate there is fellow Aussie freshman Jonathon Batzke. All-MAC punt returner Maddox returns along with Stuart, who averaged 27.9 yards per kickoff return.

FINAL ANALYSIS Toledo went 7–6 in 2021, moving Jason Candle's record to 45–27 entering his seventh full season. Despite having the MAC's No. 1-rated recruiting class for five of the past six years, the Rockets have not won a league or division title since 2017. The seat is warm for Candle, who has the talent on his roster to bring Toledo back to the MAC's forefront. If Toledo can do a better job of closing out games — the Rockets lost by a TD or less five times in 2021 — then a return to the MAC title game is possible.

DEQUAN FINN

AP Photo/AJ Mast

> "They're better than their record. They've turned around the defense very slowly, but they're better on that side than they have been in a while."
>
> —An opposing MAC assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Nasir Bowers, CB, Lakeland, FL	★★★
2	Emmanuel McNeil-Warren, S, St. Petersburg, FL	★★★
3	Virgil Marshall, ATH, Cocoa, FL	★★★
4	Malachi Davis, DL, Holt, MI	★★★
5	Junior Vandeross III, ATH, Tampa, FL	★★★
6	Kiel Eldridge, Edge, Monroeville, IN	★★★
7	Derell Bedingfield Jr., LB, Cleveland, OH	★★★
8	Stephen Gales, OT, Alliance, OH	★★★
9	Avery Smith, QB, Atlanta, GA	★★★
10	Eric Holley III, ATH, Akron, OH	★★★

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)

WR	**19**	**Jerjuan Newton (Jr.)**	84	Thomas Zsiros (Fr.)
WR	17	DeMeer Blankumsee (So.)	85	Larry Stephens (So.)
WR	**8**	**Devin Maddox (Jr.)**	10	Adam Beale (Jr.)
LT	**68**	**Mitchell Berg (Sr.)**	61	Kelvin Ateman (Sr.)
LG	**71**	**Vinny Sciurry (So.)**	70	Michael Bergen (So.)
C	**60**	**Tyler Long (Jr.)**	73	Nick Rosi (Jr.)
RG	73	Nick Rosi (Jr.)	60	Tyler Long (Jr.)
RT	**74**	**Lavel Dumont (Jr.)**	61	Kelvin Ateman (Sr.)
TE	**9**	**Jamal Turner (Sr.)**	88	Anthony Torres (Jr.)
QB	**7**	**Dequan Finn (So.)**	11	Tucker Gleason (So.)
RB	3	Micah Kelly (So.)	21	Jacquez Stuart (So.)

DEFENSE (8)

Returning Starters in BOLD

DE	**99**	**Desjuan Johnson (Sr.)**	85	Adrian Woliver (Jr.)
DT	**95**	**Judge Culpepper (Jr.)**	92	Devan Rogers (Jr.)
DT	97	Cavon Butler (Jr.)	98	Darius Alexander (So.)
LB	48	Nate Givhan (Sr.)	**56**	**Terrance Taylor (Sr.)**
LB	**91**	**Jamal Hines (Sr.)**	31	Daniel Bolden (Jr.)
LB	**2**	**Dyontae Johnson (Sr.)**	42	Jackson Barrow (So.)
CB	**27**	**Quinyon Mitchell (So.)**	11	Ronald Delancy III (So.)
CB	13	Chris McDonald (Jr.)	11	Ronald Delancy III (So.)
NB	**6**	**Nate Bauer (Jr.)**	13	Chris McDonald (Jr.)
SS	**25**	**Maxen Hook (So.)**	6	Nate Bauer (Jr.)
FS	7	Zachary Ford (Sr.)	22	Michael Lacey (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	17	Thomas Cluckey (Jr.)	KR	21	Jacquez Stuart (So.)
P	49	Jonathon Batzke (Fr.)	PR	8	Devin Maddox (Jr.)

WESTERN MICHIGAN BRONCOS

National Forecast: 106 • MAC West Prediction: 4 • Projected Record: 6-6, 5-3 MAC

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	at Michigan State
Sept. 10	at Ball State
Sept. 17	Pittsburgh
Sept. 24	at San Jose State
Oct. 1	New Hampshire
Oct. 8	Eastern Michigan
Oct. 15	Ohio
Oct. 22	at Miami (Ohio)
Nov. 2	at Bowling Green
Nov. 9	Northern Illinois
Nov. 16	at Central Michigan
Nov. 25	Toledo

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 8-5, 4-4 MAC

Sept. 4	at Michigan	L	14-47
Sept. 11	Illinois State	W	28-0
Sept. 18	at Pittsburgh	W	44-41
Sept. 25	San Jose State	W	23-3
Oct. 2	at Buffalo	W	24-17
Oct. 9	Ball State	L	20-45
Oct. 16	Kent State	W	64-31
Oct. 23	at Toledo	L	15-34
Nov. 3	Central Michigan	L	30-42
Nov. 9	Akron	W	45-40
Nov. 16	at Eastern Mich.	L	21-22
Nov. 23	at Northern Illinois	W	42-31
Dec. 27	vs. Nevada #	W	52-24

#Quick Lane Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	32.5 ppg	3	34
Rushing	212.8 ypg	3	17
Passing	253.6 ypg	4	49
Total	466.4 ypg	2	12

DEFENSE	PER GAME	MAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	28.2 ppg	4	81
Rushing	143.1 ypg	2	50
Passing	186.4 ypg	2	10
Total	329.5 ypg	1	18

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	MAC	NATIONAL
0	0.00	8	70

STAT CORNER

3.75

The Broncos' passing offense ranked eighth in efficiency in 2021, averaging 0.237 EPA/pass and 3.75 expected points added per successful play.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Jack Salopek, 5-3-20-0, 0 TDs
Rushing: Sean Tyler, 178 att., 1,140 yds., 9 TDs
Receiving: Corey Crooms, 44 rec., 768 yds., 6 TDs
Tackles: Zaire Barnes, Corvin Moment, 68
Sacks: Marshawn Kneeland, 4.5
Interceptions: Dorian Jackson, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Tim Lester
Record at School: 32-25 (5 years)
Career Record: 72-48 (11 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Jeff Thorne
Defensive Coordinator: Lou Esposito
Location: Kalamazoo, MI
Stadium: Waldo Stadium (30,200)

OFFENSE The dynamic running back duo of Sean Tyler (178 carries, 1,140 yards, nine TDs) and La'Darius Jefferson (185 carries, 836 yards, 10 TDs) will undoubtedly be major focal points once again. Additionally, Corey Crooms, last year's No. 3 wide receiver, should get a larger share of the targets this season after a solid sophomore campaign that saw him put up 44 catches for 768 yards and six scores.

There are questions, though, beginning with the quarterback position, where the spring game starting nod was given to redshirt freshman Jack Salopek with the reasoning that he had the best grasp of the offense. That competition is sure to continue into fall camp, with Alabama transfer Stone Hollenbach, redshirt freshman Mareyohn Hrabowski and sophomore Lucas Hartings in the mix.

While the run game will certainly be leaned on, the development of a young crop of receivers, including Anthony Sambucci and Kaevion Mack, to complement Crooms could be the biggest determining factor in how powerful the WMU offense ultimately is.

DEFENSE Second-team All-MAC linebacker Zaire Barnes tied for the team lead with 68 tackles a year ago, including seven for a loss. He will once again be tasked with blowing up plays in the backfield, with perhaps even more pressure to do so after the Broncos lost a pair of first-team All-MAC defensive linemen to graduation.

Joining Barnes in the linebacker crew will be All-MAC third-teamer Corvin Moment (68 tackles, 10 TFLs) and Ryan Selig (63 tackles, 4.0 sacks), giving Western Michigan a solid and experienced set of 'backers.

At safety, the Broncos welcome back Delano Ware (40 tackles) and Bricen Garner, while in the spring game the starting reps at cornerback went to Keni-H Lovely and Purdue transfer Anthony Romphf.

The Broncos led the conference with 3.3 sacks per game, so finding replacements for key contributors up front is currently the most urgent task.

SPECIALISTS In 2021, Western Michigan relied on Nick Mihalic for most of its kicking and all the punting chores. He could resume both duties once again after going 9-of-11 on field goals, although his longest make was only 30 yards. Mihalic will return to his punting duties after averaging 41.9 yards per boot in 2021, with 14 of his 47 boots going inside the 20. Tyler was very explosive in the kickoff return department — he took two back for TDs.

FINAL ANALYSIS Tim Lester has taken his alma mater to a bowl game in three of his five seasons as head coach, but the former standout quarterback has never produced a MAC West title, and two of the three bowl games have been defeats. The good news is that there are a few more names expected to join the roster during the summer transfer portal, which could make the difference in the next goal of hoisting the program's first conference championship trophy since 2016.

SEAN TYLER

Aaron J. Thornton/Getty Images

> "They're QB driven, so there's big questions for them. They have a good, simple plan. They're going to find a handful of playmakers and get them as many touches as they can."
>
> —An opposing MAC assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Tag Bonnema, LB, Zeeland, MI	★★★
2	Treyson Bourguet, QB, Tucson, AZ	★★★
3	Saveon Brown, S, South Holland, IL	★★★
4	Jamal Hailey, RB, Berrien Springs, MI	★★★
5	Isaiah Street, Edge, Brownsburg, IN	★★★
6	Nate Anderson, WR, Ft. Wayne, IN	★★★
7	Jashawn Johnson, WR, River Grove, IL	★★★
8	Kenny Givens, DL, Chicago, IL*	★★★
9	Dillon Moore, ATH, Indianapolis, IN	★★★
10	Trevor Shaw, OT, Cheshire, CT	★★★

*junior college transfer

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (4)

WR	15	Kaevion Mack (Fr.)	2	Anthony Sambucci (So.)
WR	**4**	**Corey Crooms (Jr.)**	13	Henry Wilson Jr. (Fr.)
WR	2	Anthony Sambucci (So.)	11	Tyren Mason (Fr.)
LT	61	Stuart Kettler (So.)	76	Brandon Honorable (Fr.)
LG	65	Trevor Campbell (Sr.)	59	Jack Taylor (Fr.)
C	**77**	**Jacob Gideon (So.)**	56	Kyle Arnoldi (So.)
RG	**72**	**Dylan Deatherage (Sr.)**	75	Addison West (So.)
RT	71	Adam Vandervest (So.)	36	Jack Sherwin (So.)
TE	88	Austin Hence (Sr.)	87	Mitch Bartol (So.)
QB	6	Jack Salopek (Fr.)	14	Stone Hollenbach (So.)
RB	**9**	**Sean Tyler (Jr.)**	3	La'Darius Jefferson (Sr.)

DEFENSE (7)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	**1**	**Andre Carter (Jr.)**	58	Tyson Lee (Fr.)
DT	**55**	**Braden Fiske (Jr.)**	54	Mason Nelson (Fr.)
DT	5	Bryce Austin (So.)	8	Hozey Haji-Badri (Sr.)
DE	94	Marshawn Kneeland (So.)	50	Corey Walker (Fr.)
SLB	**3**	**Zaire Barnes (Sr.)**	13	Harrison Taylor (Sr.)
MLB	**20**	**Corvin Moment (Sr.)**	10	Matthew Stuckey (Jr.)
WLB	**27**	**Ryan Selig (Jr.)**	22	Boone Bonnema (So.)
CB	18	Keni-H Lovely (Jr.)	**23**	**Dorian Jackson (Sr.)**
CB	7	Anthony Romphf (So.)	0	DaShon Bussell (Jr.)
S	26	Delano Ware (Sr.)	31	Ryan Kilburg (So.)
S	**2**	**Bricen Garner (Sr.)**	4	Damari Roberson (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	39	Nick Mihalic (Sr.)	**KR**	9	Sean Tyler (Jr.)
P	39	Nick Mihalic (Sr.)	**PR**	0	DaShon Bussell (Jr.)

MW PREVIEW

MOUNTAIN DIVISION
PREDICTED ORDER OF FINISH

1	BOISE STATE **BRONCOS**	10-3, 7-1
2	AIR FORCE **FALCONS**	9-3, 6-2
3	UTAH STATE **AGGIES**	8-4, 6-2
4	COLORADO STATE **RAMS**	6-6, 4-4
5	WYOMING **COWBOYS**	5-7, 4-4
6	NEW MEXICO **LOBOS**	4-8, 1-7

WEST DIVISION
PREDICTED ORDER OF FINISH

1	FRESNO STATE **BULLDOGS**	9-4, 6-2
2	SAN DIEGO STATE **AZTECS**	8-4, 5-3
3	SAN JOSE STATE **SPARTANS**	6-6, 3-5
4	UNLV **REBELS**	4-8, 3-5
5	NEVADA **WOLF PACK**	5-7, 2-6
6	HAWAII **RAINBOW WARRIORS**	3-10, 1-7

Games to Watch

San Diego State at Utah, Sept. 17
Fresno State at USC, Sept. 17
Utah State at BYU, Sept. 29
San Diego State at Boise State, Oct. 1
Fresno State at Boise State, Oct. 8
Air Force at Utah State, Oct. 8
Colorado State at Nevada, Oct. 8
Boise State at Air Force, Oct. 22
San Diego State at Fresno State, Oct. 29
BYU at Boise State, Nov. 5
Utah State at Boise State, Nov. 26
Air Force at San Diego State, Nov. 26

HANK BACHMEIER

Mountain West Championship:
Boise State over Fresno State

Recruiting by School

1. Boise State
2. San Diego State
3. Fresno State
4. Utah State
5. San Jose State
6. Colorado State
7. Wyoming
8. New Mexico
9. UNLV
10. Air Force
11. Nevada
12. Hawaii

Peter Brouillet

ALL-MW TEAM

FIRST-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	**Jake Haener**	Sr.	Fresno State
RB	**Brad Roberts**	Sr.	Air Force
RB	**Titus Swen**	Jr.	Wyoming
AP	**Jordan Mims**	Sr.	Fresno State
WR	**Jalen Cropper**	Sr.	Fresno State
WR	**Stefan Cobbs**	Sr.	Boise State
WR	**Jesse Matthews**	Sr.	San Diego State
C	**Alama Uluave**	Sr.	San Diego State
OL	**John Ojukwu**	Sr.	Boise State
OL	**Isaac Cochran**	Sr.	Air Force
OL	**Alfred Edwards III**	Sr.	Utah State
OL	**Aaron Frost**	Sr.	Nevada

FIRST-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	**Viliami Fehoko**	Jr.	San Jose State
DL	**Dom Peterson**	Sr.	Nevada
DL	**Scott Matlock**	Sr.	Boise State
DL	**Jonah Tavai**	Sr.	San Diego State
DL	**Keshawn Banks**	Sr.	San Diego State
LB	**Caden McDonald**	Sr.	San Diego State
LB	**Vince Sanford**	Sr.	Air Force
LB	**Kyle Harmon**	Sr.	San Jose State
DB	**Patrick McMorris**	Sr.	San Diego State
DB	**Evan Williams**	Sr.	Fresno State
DB	**JL Skinner**	Sr.	Boise State
DB	**Trey Taylor**	Jr.	Air Force

FIRST-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	**Jonah Dalmas**	Jr.	Boise State	P	**Stephen Kotsanlee**	Jr.	Utah State
KR	**Jordan Byrd**	Sr.	San Diego State	PR	**Jordan Byrd**	Sr.	San Diego State

SECOND-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	**Logan Bonner**	Sr.	Utah State
RB	**Calvin Tyler Jr.**	Sr.	Utah State
RB	**George Holani**	Jr.	Boise State
AP	**Toa Taua**	Sr.	Nevada
WR	**Tory Horton**	Jr.	Colorado State
WR	**Josh Kelly**	Jr.	Fresno State
WR	**Dante Wright**	Sr.	Colorado State
C	**Leif Fautanu**	Jr.	UNLV
OL	**Quazzel White**	Sr.	Utah State
OL	**Frank Crum**	Jr.	Wyoming
OL	**Everett Smalley**	Jr.	Air Force
OL	**Ben Dooley**	Jr.	Boise State

SECOND-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	**Cole Godbout**	Jr.	Wyoming
DL	**David Perales**	Sr.	Fresno State
DL	**Blessman Ta’ala**	Sr.	Hawaii
DL	**Devin Phillips**	Sr.	Colorado State
DL	**Christopher Herrera**	Sr.	Air Force
LB	**Ezekiel Noa**	Sr.	Boise State
LB	**Dequan Jackson**	Sr.	Colorado State
LB	**Easton Gibbs**	So.	Wyoming
CB	**Nehemiah Shelton**	Sr.	San Jose State
CB	**Nohl Williams**	Jr.	UNLV
S	**Tyreque Jones**	Sr.	Boise State
S	**Jerrick Reed II**	Sr.	New Mexico

SECOND-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	**Daniel Gutierrez**	Sr.	UNLV	P	**Aaron Rodriguez**	Jr.	New Mexico
KR	**Jamaal Bell**	Jr.	Nevada	PR	**Thomas Pannunzio**	Sr.	Colorado State

THIRD-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	**Hank Bachmeier**	Sr.	Boise State
RB	**DeAndre Hughes**	Sr.	Air Force
RB	**Dedrick Parson**	Sr.	Hawaii
AP	**Micah Davis**	Jr.	Air Force
WR	**Justin McGriff**	Sr.	Utah State
WR	**Elijah Cooks**	Sr.	San Jose State
WR	**Kyle Williams**	Jr.	UNLV
C	**Chandler Dolphin**	Sr.	Utah State
OL	**Ilm Manning**	Sr.	Hawaii
OL	**Jacob Gardner**	Jr.	Colorado State
OL	**Kaleb Holcomb**	Jr.	Air Force
OL	**Tyler Stevens**	Sr.	San Jose State

THIRD-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	**Cade Hall**	Sr.	San Jose State
DL	**Shane Irwin**	Sr.	Boise State
DL	**Byron Vaughns**	Jr.	Utah State
DL	**Jake Saltonstall**	Sr.	New Mexico
DL	**Eliel Ehimare**	Sr.	UNLV
LB	**Cam’Ron Carter**	Sr.	Colorado State
LB	**Levelle Bailey**	Sr.	Fresno State
LB	**Ray Leutele**	Jr.	New Mexico
CB	**Noah Avinger**	So.	San Diego State
CB	**Kaonohi Kaniho**	So.	Boise State
S	**Tavian Combs**	Jr.	New Mexico
S	**Tre Jenkins**	Sr.	San Jose State

THIRD-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	**Brandon Talton**	Sr.	Nevada	P	**Ralph Fawaz**	So.	Wyoming
KR	**Thomas Pannunzio**	Sr.	Colorado State	PR	**Luke Wysong**	So.	New Mexico

2022 BOWL PROJECTIONS

Arizona Bowl
Fresno State vs. Toledo

Famous Idaho Potato Bowl
Air Force vs. Northern Illinois

Frisco Bowl
Colorado State vs. North Texas

Hawaii Bowl
San Diego State vs. BYU

LA Bowl
Boise State vs. Washington State

New Mexico Bowl
Utah State vs. UTSA

2021 STANDINGS

Mountain	MW	Overall
Utah State	6-2	11-3
Air Force	6-2	10-3
Boise State	5-3	7-5
Wyoming	2-6	7-6
Colorado State	2-6	3-9
New Mexico	1-7	3-9

West	MW	Overall
San Diego State	7-1	12-2
Fresno State	6-2	10-3
Nevada	5-3	8-5
San Jose State	3-5	5-7
Hawaii	3-5	6-7
UNLV	2-6	2-10

2021 BOWL RESULTS

New Orleans Bowl
Fresno State 31, UTEP 24

LA Bowl
Utah State 24, Oregon State 13

Famous Idaho Potato Bowl
Wyoming 52, Kent State 38

Frisco Bowl
San Diego State 38, UTSA 24

Quick Lane Bowl
Western Michigan 52, Nevada 24

First Responder Bowl
Air Force 31, Louisville 28

AIR FORCE FALCONS

National Forecast: 37 • MW Mountain Prediction: 2 • Projected Record: 9-3, 6-2 MW

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Northern Iowa
Sept. 10	Colorado
Sept. 17	at Wyoming
Sept. 24	Nevada
Oct. 1	Navy
Oct. 8	at Utah State
Oct. 15	at UNLV
Oct. 22	Boise State
Nov. 5	vs. Army #
Nov. 12	New Mexico
Nov. 19	Colorado State
Nov. 26	at San Diego State

#Arlington, TX

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 10-3, 6-2 MWC

Sept. 4	Lafayette	W	35-14
Sept. 11	at Navy	W	23-3
Sept. 18	Utah State	L	45-49
Sept. 25	Florida Atlantic	W	31-7
Oct. 2	at New Mexico	W	38-10
Oct. 9	Wyoming	W	24-14
Oct. 16	at Boise State	W	24-17
Oct. 23	San Diego State	L	14-20
Nov. 6	vs. Army # (ot)	L	14-21
Nov. 13	at Colorado State	W	35-21
Nov. 19	at Nevada (ot)	W	41-39
Nov. 26	UNLV	W	48-14
Dec. 28	vs. Louisville %	W	31-28

#Arlington %First Responder Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MW	NATIONAL
Scoring	31.0 ppg	4	47
Rushing	327.7 ypg	1	1
Passing	95.5 ypg	12	128
Total	423.2 ypg	4	51

DEFENSE	PER GAME	MW	NATIONAL
Scoring	19.8 ppg	2	16
Rushing	102.2 ypg	2	9
Passing	194.4 ypg	2	19
Total	296.5 ypg	1	4

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	MW	NATIONAL
+6	+0.46	4	31

STAT CORNER

0.063

Air Force moved the ball efficiently, ranking 46th in early-downs EPA at 0.063 EPA/play.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Haaziq Daniels, 104-52-1,184-3, 7 TDs
Rushing: Brad Roberts, 298 att., 1,352 yds., 13 TDs
Receiving: Micah Davis, 10 rec., 221 yds., 2 TDs
Tackles: Trey Taylor, 62
Sacks: Vince Sanford, 9.5
Interceptions: Bo Richter, Trey Taylor, 1

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Troy Calhoun
Record at School: 111-75 (15 years)
Career Record: 111-75 (15 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Mike Thiessen
Defensive Coordinator: Brian Knorr
Location: Colorado Springs, CO
Stadium: Falcon Stadium (46,692)

OFFENSE Haaziq Daniels' versatility is underscored by the school records he's set. As a junior, he posted the program's longest run (94 yards vs. Florida Atlantic) and longest pass (92 yards vs. Colorado State). No other team has those two records authored by the same player. Daniels capped the season with an MVP performance in the First Responder Bowl, completing 9-of-10 passes for 252 yards and two TDs while adding a pair of rushing scores.

Daniels returns as a three-year starter and will have the majority of his playmakers back with him. Senior fullback Brad Roberts rumbled for 1,352 rushing yards in 2021, third most in program history. Three of the top four weapons are back at the tailback/wingback positions in Micah Davis, DeAndre Hughes and Dane Kinamon, who combined for nearly 1,400 yards from scrimmage and 16 touchdowns last year.

The offensive line replaced all five starters a year ago yet still paved the way to the national rushing title. Three of five starters return this year, and the other spots will be manned by center Thor Paglialong and guard Wesley Ndago, who started a combined nine games last year.

DEFENSE Air Force is well positioned to absorb the losses of four multiyear starters because of the opportunities created by injuries. Defensive tackle Jayden Thiergood (in for Jordan Jackson), cornerback Michael Mack II (in for Tré Bugg), linebacker TD Blackmon (in for Demonte Meeks) and safety Jayden Goodwin (in for Corvan Taylor) have all started at times for the Falcons.

Outside linebacker Vince Sanford was a breakout star with 9.5 sacks and 17 tackles for a loss. Sanford benefited from the attention paid to Jackson, but defensive tackle Christopher Herrera may similarly draw double teams to free up Sanford and others.

Safety Trey Taylor missed the first three games yet was second on the team with 62 tackles as a sophomore. He has All-MW potential.

The biggest change came in the coaching staff, as as Brian Knorr replaced defensive coordinator John Rudzinski, who left for Virginia, amid a series of moves that left only Knorr (inside linebackers) returning to the same position group on the defensive side.

SPECIALISTS The Falcons' strategy in the kicking game is simply to avoid mistakes. They attempted returns on just seven of 50 opponents' kickoffs and five of 60 punts. Matthew Dapore settled into the placekicking role as a freshman and connected on eight of his 10 attempts after the team had started 3-of-7 on field-goal tries.

FINAL ANALYSIS Air Force has won 21 of 27 games since Oct. 2019. It leads college football in rushing in that span and has ranked in the nation's top six in total defense each of the past two years. With a roster loaded with experience, head coach Troy Calhoun's machine should keep rolling. The schedule helps, too, bringing four key games — Boise State, Colorado, Colorado State, Navy — to Falcon Stadium, where the team is 36–9 since 2014.

BRAD ROBERTS

Mark Goldman/Icon Sportswire via Getty Images

> "They're brutal to play if you're a top-half team in this league. They've done a fantastic job as a development program, and they don't blink. You can't scare them."
>
> —An opposing MW assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Jack Curtis, Edge, Dallas, TX	★★★
2	Cooper Roy, LB, Springfield, MO	★★★
3	Jeremiah Jackson, OL, Lakeland, FL	★★★
4	Kade Frew, RB, Jacksonville, FL	★★★
5	Kemper Hodges, QB, Santa Rosa Beach, FL	★★★
6	Luke Sudul, OL, Marietta, GA	★★★
7	Kaden Cloud, RB, Gilbert, AZ	★★★
8	Luke Meyer, Edge, Littleton, CO	★★★
9	JJ Bwire, TE, Las Vegas, NV	★★
10	Andrew Tillett, DL, Sumner, WA	★★

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (9)

WR	**7**	**David Cormier (Sr.)**	25	Conner Carey (Sr.)
WR	**0**	**Micah Davis (Jr.)**	**23**	**Dane Kinamon (Jr.)**
LT	**63**	**Everett Smalley (Jr.)**	56	Mark Hiestand (Sr.)
LG	**73**	**Isaac Cochran (Sr.)**	75	Ethan Jackman (Jr.)
C	68	Thor Paglialong (Jr.)	64	Luke Hallstrom (Jr.)
RG	72	Wesley Ndago (Jr.)	66	Ayden McCollough (Jr.)
RT	**51**	**Kaleb Holcomb (Jr.)**	59	Adam Karas (Jr.)
TE	**88**	**Kyle Patterson (Sr.)**	84	Caleb Rillos (Jr.)
QB	**4**	**Haaziq Daniels (Sr.)**	9	Zachary Larrier (Jr.)
RB	8	DeAndre Hughes (Sr.)	24	John Lee Eldridge III (Jr.)
FB	**20**	**Brad Roberts (Sr.)**	28	Emmanuel Michel (Sr.)

DEFENSE (6)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DL	48	Jayden Thiergood (Jr.)	96	Payton Zdroik (So.)
NG	**98**	**Kalawai'a Pescaia (Sr.)**	92	Elijah Brockman (Sr.)
DL	**49**	**Christopher Herrera (Sr.)**	55	Kapono Blake (Jr.)
OLB	**26**	**Vince Sanford (Sr.)**	6	Matthew Malloy (Jr.)
ILB	**40**	**Alec Mock (Jr.)**	31	Bo Richter (Jr.)
ILB	27	TD Blackmon (Sr.)	35	Johnathan Youngblood (Jr.)
OLB	**11**	**Camby Goff (Jr.)**	10	Jalen Mergerson (Jr.)
CB	2	Eian Castonguay (Jr.)	17	Zion Kelly (Sr.)
CB	9	Michael Mack II (Jr.)	37	Corey Collins (Jr.)
SS	**7**	**Trey Taylor (Jr.)**	19	Jake Martin (So.)
FS	16	Jayden Goodwin (Jr.)	12	Patrick Dahlen (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	43	Matthew Dapore (So.)	**KR**	0	Micah Davis (Jr.)
P	95	Carson Bay (So.)	**PR**	23	Dane Kinamon (Jr.)

BOISE STATE BRONCOS

National Forecast: 34 • MW Mountain Prediction: 1 • Projected Record: 10-3, 7-1 MW

OFFENSE Senior quarterback Hank Bachmeier has weathered a lot of hits in his 25 starts, and he has yet to fully live up to his considerable recruiting hype. He's focused on a quicker release, and, for the first time, he has the same offensive coordinator in consecutive seasons.

Adding to the challenge is the loss of Khalil Shakir, the Broncos' do-it-all receiver, but a likely breakout star awaits in senior Stefan Cobbs. In nine games, he had five TD catches and an 81-yard punt return TD. The rest of the returning receiving corps combined for 30 catches last season. Three returning tight ends combined for 23.

The offensive line is experienced but remains a question mark after allowing 27 sacks and far too many hits on Bachmeier. Washington State transfer Cade Beresford (eight starts in 2021) adds a needed big, experienced body.

Junior running back George Holani had three 100-yard games in November, but durability has been an issue: He has missed six games the last two seasons. Keep an eye on true freshman Ashton Jeanty, an agile early enrollee who should help a team that has only three rushes of more than 30 yards since Thanksgiving 2019.

DEFENSE Head coach Andy Avalos' defensive background showed up immediately as the Broncos allowed 19.0 ppg, the fewest in nine seasons. And the 2022 defense should be just as good, if not better, with a ton of returning experience.

All four Broncos who had at least three sacks return, including defensive tackle Scott Matlock (seven) and edge rusher Isaiah Bagnah (six). Injuries slowed defensive end Shane Irwin in 2021, but he had six sacks in seven games in 2020. Weber State transfer George Tarlas had 17 sacks in 45 games with the Wildcats.

A lack of athleticism at linebacker was addressed with the addition of highly touted freshmen Dishawn Misa and Jayden Virgin.

The Broncos were one of 13 teams in 2021 to have more interceptions (13) than passing TDs allowed (12). The defensive backfield is loaded, with seven returnees who made at least three starts last season. Senior safety JL Skinner could be a fast-rising 2023 NFL Draft pick.

SPECIALISTS Junior kicker Jonah Dalmas is well on his way to being the best Boise State has ever had, hitting 33-of-36 career field goals, including a school-record 26 last season. Punting duties are up for grabs, with Aussie James Ferguson-Reynolds an early enrollee. Cobbs could be an electric returner, too.

FINAL ANALYSIS The Broncos must find the offensive spark that has been missing in recent years if they want to win an improved Mountain Division. If the offense's veteran playmakers stay healthy, points should be more plentiful than 2021. The experienced defense likely will be one of the nation's best.

Boise State doesn't stay down long, and with a home schedule that sees Fresno State, San Diego State, Utah State and BYU visit, the Broncos should again contend for double-digit wins.

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	at Oregon State
Sept. 10	at New Mexico
Sept. 17	UT-Martin
Sept. 24	at UTEP
Oct. 1	San Diego State
Oct. 8	Fresno State
Oct. 22	at Air Force
Oct. 29	Colorado State
Nov. 5	BYU
Nov. 12	at Nevada
Nov. 19	at Wyoming
Nov. 26	Utah State

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 7-5, 5-3 MWC

Sept. 2	at UCF	L	31-36
Sept. 10	UTEP	W	54-13
Sept. 18	Oklahoma State	L	20-21
Sept. 25	at Utah State	W	27-3
Oct. 2	Nevada	L	31-41
Oct. 9	at BYU	W	26-17
Oct. 16	Air Force	L	17-24
Oct. 30	at Colorado State	W	28-19
Nov. 6	at Fresno State	W	40-14
Nov. 12	Wyoming	W	23-13
Nov. 20	New Mexico	W	37-0
Nov. 26	at San Diego State	L	16-27

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MW	NATIONAL
Scoring	29.2 ppg	5	58
Rushing	120.4 ypg	9	110
Passing	260.6 ypg	5	37
Total	381.0 ypg	7	78

DEFENSE	PER GAME	MW	NATIONAL
Scoring	19.0 ppg	1	12
Rushing	157.5 ypg	7	75
Passing	206.9 ypg	3	30
Total	364.4 ypg	5	45

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	MW	NATIONAL
+7	+0.58	3	22

STAT CORNER

35.6%

Boise State held opponents to a 35.6% passing success rate, allowing 60.1% completion percent on 13.6 yards per completion. The Broncos' passing defense ranked 18th in the FBS in success rate.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Hank Bachmeier, 401-252-3,079-8, 20 TDs
Rushing: George Holani, 119 att., 569 yds., 1 TD
Receiving: Stefan Cobbs, 34 rec., 421 yds., 5 TDs
Tackles: JL Skinner, 92
Sacks: Scott Matlock, 7.0
Interceptions: Tyric LeBeauf, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Andy Avalos
Record at School: 7-5 (1 year)
Career Record: 7-5 (1 year)
Offensive Coordinator: Tim Plough
Defensive Coordinator: Spencer Danielson
Location: Boise, ID
Stadium: Albertsons Stadium (36,387)

HANK BACHMEIER

Peter Brouillet

> "If they can protect Hank [Bachmeier], they can jump right back and win the conference. They still operate with a different standard than the rest of us."
>
> —An opposing MW assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Dishawn Misa, LB, Sammamish, WA	★★★★
2	Austin Terry, TE, Olympia, WA	★★★
3	Jayden Virgin, LB, San Diego, CA	★★★
4	Zamondre Merriweather, ATH, Valencia, CA	★★★
5	Kage Casey, OT, Clackamas, OR	★★★
6	Ashton Jeanty, RB, Frisco, TX	★★★
7	Cortez Hogans, DL, Palatine, IL*	★★★
8	Deven Wright, Edge, Southaven, MS*	★★★
9	Dionte Thornton, S, Lawndale, CA	★★★
10	Braxton Fely, DL, Provo, UT	★★★

*junior college transfer

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

WR	**5**	**Stefan Cobbs (Sr.)**	7	Latrell Caples (So.)
WR	17	Davis Koetter (Sr.)	27	Shea Whiting (Jr.)
WR	18	Billy Bowens (Sr.)	81	Austin Bolt (So.)
LT	**70**	**John Ojukwu (Sr.)**	63	Mason Randolph (Fr.)
LG	**69**	**Garrett Curran (Sr.)**	72	Dallas Holliday (Sr.)
C	55	Kekaniokoa Holomalia-Gonzalez (Sr.)	75	Will Farrar (Sr.)
RG	71	Cade Beresford (Sr.)	57	Nathan Cardona (So.)
RT	**66**	**Ben Dooley (Jr.)**	74	Jacob Golden (Jr.)
TE	**3**	**Riley Smith (Sr.)**	88	Tyneil Hopper (Sr.)
QB	**19**	**Hank Bachmeier (Sr.)**	10	Taylen Green (Fr.)
RB	**24**	**George Holani (Jr.)**	2	Ashton Jeanty (Fr.)

DEFENSE (8)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	55	Shane Irwin (Sr.)	**38**	**Demitri Washington (Sr.)**
NT	**94**	**Jackson Cravens (Sr.)**	98	Herbert Gums (So.)
DT	**99**	**Scott Matlock (Sr.)**	92	Michael Callahan (Jr.)
EDGE	30	Isaiah Bagnah (Jr.)	44	George Tarlas (Sr.)
LB	**7**	**Ezekiel Noa (Sr.)**		Dishawn Misa (Fr.)
LB	3	Brandon Hawkins (Sr.)	52	DJ Schramm (Sr.)
CB	8	Markel Reed (Sr.)	**14**	**Kaonohi Kaniho (So.)**
CB	22	Tyric LeBeauf (Sr.)	**26**	**Caleb Biggers (Sr.)**
NB	4	Rodney Robinson (So.)	20	Roman Kafentzis (Sr.)
S	**0**	**JL Skinner (Sr.)**	23	Seyi Oladipo (So.)
S	**21**	**Tyreque Jones (Sr.)**	34	Alexander Teubner (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	35	Jonah Dalmas (Jr.)	KR	7	Latrell Caples (So.)
P	46	James Ferguson-Reynolds (Fr.)	PR	5	Stefan Cobbs (Sr.)

COLORADO STATE RAMS

National Forecast: 86 • MW Mountain Prediction: 4 • Projected Record: 6-6, 4-4 MW

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	at Michigan
Sept. 10	Middle Tennessee
Sept. 17	at Washington State
Sept. 24	Sacramento State
Oct. 8	at Nevada
Oct. 15	Utah State
Oct. 22	Hawaii
Oct. 29	at Boise State
Nov. 5	at San Jose State
Nov. 12	Wyoming
Nov. 19	at Air Force
Nov. 26	New Mexico

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 3-9, 2-6 MWC

Sept. 3	South Dakota St.	L	23-42
Sept. 11	Vanderbilt	L	21-24
Sept. 18	at Toledo	W	22-6
Sept. 25	at Iowa	L	14-24
Oct. 9	San Jose State	W	32-14
Oct. 16	at New Mexico	W	36-7
Oct. 22	at Utah State	L	24-26
Oct. 30	Boise State	L	19-28
Nov. 6	at Wyoming	L	17-31
Nov. 13	Air Force	L	21-35
Nov. 20	at Hawaii	L	45-50
Nov. 27	Nevada	L	10-52

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MW	NATIONAL
Scoring	23.7 ppg	9	98
Rushing	164.1 ypg	4	62
Passing	251.7 ypg	6	52
Total	415.8 ypg	5	57

DEFENSE	PER GAME	MW	NATIONAL
Scoring	28.2 ppg	9	82
Rushing	166.2 ypg	9	86
Passing	211.1 ypg	4	37
Total	377.3 ypg	8	64

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	MW	NATIONAL
-5	-0.42	9	98

STAT CORNER

1

Colorado State scored 25 non-garbage TDs in 2021; only one of those came on a play that started on Colorado State's own side of the field. The Rams averaged 3.82 points per quality possession, ranking 115th in the FBS.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: None
Rushing: David Bailey, 197 att., 752 yds., 9 TDs
Receiving: Dante Wright, 43 rec., 538 yds., 3 TDs
Tackles: Cam'Ron Carter, 101
Sacks: Mohamed Kamara, 7.5
Interceptions: Robert Floyd, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Jay Norvell
Record at School: First Season
Career Record: 33-26 (5 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Jay Norvell
Defensive Coordinator: Freddie Banks
Location: Fort Collins, CO
Stadium: Canvas Stadium (36,500)

OFFENSE Jay Norvell brought the Air Raid offense with him when he left Nevada to become Colorado State's new head coach on Dec. 6. Freshman quarterback Clay Millen (who backed up Carson Strong while redshirting at Nevada last year), receivers Tory Horton and Melquan Stovall and five other offensive players followed their coaches, eager to continue playing in the same pass-happy system at a new school in the same conference.

Although Millen is the likely starter, two QBs in Norvell's first CSU signing class — true freshmen Jackson Stratton and Brayden Fowler-Nicolosi — graduated early from high school to join the Rams for spring practices.

The Rams lost Mackey Award-winning tight end Trey McBride to the NFL Draft and their entire offensive line to graduation or the transfer portal, but they return talented receivers in Dante Wright, who has 120 career catches for 1,660 receiving yards and seven TDs, and Ty McCullouch (17.3 ypc). Last year's top two running backs, David Bailey and A'Jon Vivens, will battle Nevada transfer Avery Morrow for the starting job.

DEFENSE There's a wholesale change taking place on the CSU defense as well under new coordinator Freddie Banks. Norvell's defensive backs coach in 2020 at Nevada, Banks served as the defensive coordinator last year at FCS runner-up Montana State. His 4-2-5 defense will attack the offense with a variety of stunts and blitzes.

Banks has some experience to work with, led by linebackers Cam'Ron Carter and Dequan Jackson. Defensive end Mohamed Kamara posted 7.5 sacks last season.

Nickel back Tywan Francis and safeties Jack Howell — the son of former CSU and NFL safety John Howell — and Henry Blackburn are proven performers in a secondary bolstered by the addition of transfers Angel King (Nevada), Chigozie Anusiem (California), D'Andre Greeley (City College of San Francisco) and Titus Jones (Alabama A&M).

SPECIALISTS Punter Ryan Stonehouse, who set an NCAA record with his career average of 47.8 yards per kick, graduated but was immediately replaced by Nevada transfer Paddy Turner, an Australian with four seasons of eligibility left. Cayden Camper, who made 25-of-32 field goals last season — including 6-of-9 from 40 or more yards — returns to handle the kicking duties. The Rams also have their primary return man back in Thomas Pannunzio.

FINAL ANALYSIS The revolving door on the head coach's office — Norvell is the fifth in 15 years — has negated much of the positive impact the Rams were hoping to gain with the opening of their new on-campus stadium six years ago. But Norvell, 59, has proven he can win in the MW, earning bowl bids each of the past four years at Nevada. The season opener at Michigan is followed by a relatively favorable schedule, highlighted by Norvell's return to Nevada on Oct. 8 for CSU's MW opener. It's a slate that gives the Rams a shot at making a bowl trip for the first time since 2017.

TY MCCULLOUCH

> "We know they're gonna build something solid down the road, but how quickly can they turn it? It's a safe bet they're competing for the MWC title in a few seasons."
>
> —An opposing MW assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Mekhi Fox, ATH, Pasadena, CA	★★★
2	Jackson Stratton, QB, La Jolla, CA	★★★
3	Marshon Oxley, LB, Inglewood, CA	★★★
4	Corey Lambert Jr., S, New Orleans, LA	★★★
5	Jordan Williams, TE, Santa Fe Springs, CA	★★★
6	Brayden Fowler-Nicolosi, QB, Aledo, TX	★★★
7	Aubrey Scott, OT, Lawndale, CA	★★★
8	D'Andre Greeley, CB, Fresno, CA*	★★★
9	Justus Ross-Simmons, WR, Inglewood, CA	★★★
10	Louis Brown, WR, Inglewood, CA	★★★

*junior college transfer

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (3)

WR	14	Tory Horton (Jr.)	3	E.J. Scott (Sr.)
WR	**6**	**Ty McCullouch (Sr.)**	2	Justice McCoy (Sr.)
WR	**22**	**Dante Wright (Sr.)**	0	Melquan Stovall (Sr.)
T	71	Brian Crespo-Jaquez (So.)	72	Dirk Nelson (So.)
G	74	Dante Bivens (Sr.)	56	Ches Jackson (Sr.)
C	75	Jacob Gardner (Jr.)	73	Gage Gaynor (So.)
G	67	Gray Davis (Sr.)	57	Trevyn Heil (Fr.)
T	52	Dontae Keys (Sr.)	79	Tex Elliott (So.)
TE	41	Tanner Arkin (Fr.)	84	Gary Williams (Sr.)
QB	11	Clay Millen (Fr.)	12	Giles Pooler (Fr.)
RB	1	A'Jon Vivens (Sr.)	25	Avery Morrow (Jr.)

DEFENSE (5)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	2	CJ Onyechi (Sr.)	15	Brandon Hickerson-Rooks (Sr.)
DT	**94**	**Devin Phillips (Sr.)**	93	Teivis Tuioti (So.)
DT	91	James Mitchell (Jr.)	68	Cam Bariteau (Jr.)
DE	42	Mohamed Kamara (Sr.)	90	Grady Kelly (Fr.)
LB	**12**	**Cam'Ron Carter (Sr.)**	55	Tavian Brown (Jr.)
LB	**5**	**Dequan Jackson (Sr.)**	13	Bam Amina (Jr.)
CB	19	D'Andre Greeley (So.)	25	Robert Floyd (So.)
CB	7	Chigozie Anusiem (Sr.)	14	Brandon Guzman (So.)
NB	**8**	**Tywan Francis (Sr.)**	20	Langston Williams (Fr.)
SS	**17**	**Jack Howell (So.)**	11	Henry Blackburn (Jr.)
FS	4	Angel King (Jr.)	34	Titus Jones (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	95	Cayden Camper (Sr.)	KR	18	Thomas Pannunzio (Sr.)
P	41	Paddy Turner (Fr.)	PR	18	Thomas Pannunzio (Sr.)

Colorado State Athletics

NEW MEXICO LOBOS

National Forecast: 124 • MW Mountain Prediction: 6 • Projected Record: 4-8, 1-7 MW

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Maine
Sept. 10	Boise State
Sept. 17	UTEP
Sept. 24	at LSU
Oct. 1	at UNLV
Oct. 8	Wyoming
Oct. 15	at New Mexico State
Oct. 22	Fresno State
Nov. 5	at Utah State
Nov. 12	at Air Force
Nov. 19	San Diego State
Nov. 26	at Colorado State

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 3-9, 1-7 MWC

Sept. 2	Houston Baptist	W	27-17
Sept. 11	New Mexico State	W	34-25
Sept. 18	at Texas A&M	L	0-34
Sept. 25	at UTEP	L	13-20
Oct. 2	Air Force	L	10-38
Oct. 9	at San Diego State	L	7-31
Oct. 16	Colorado State	L	7-36
Oct. 23	at Wyoming	W	14-3
Nov. 6	UNLV	L	17-31
Nov. 13	at Fresno State	L	7-34
Nov. 20	at Boise State	L	0-37
Nov. 26	Utah State	L	10-35

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MW	NATIONAL
Scoring	12.2 ppg	12	130
Rushing	120.8 ypg	8	108
Passing	114.1 ypg	11	127
Total	234.9 ypg	12	130

DEFENSE	PER GAME	MW	NATIONAL
Scoring	28.4 ppg	10	86
Rushing	143.2 ypg	5	51
Passing	219.8 ypg	5	54
Total	363.1 ypg	4	44

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	MW	NATIONAL
-7	-0.58	11	108

STAT CORNER

130

New Mexico's offense was the worst in the nation in terms of explosiveness. The Lobos averaged -0.273 EPA/play, -0.235 EPA/rush, and -0.317 EPA/pass, all ranking No. 130 in college football.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Isaiah Chavez, 24-17-161-1, 2 TDs
Rushing: Peyton Dixon, 29 att., 120 yds., 0 TDs
Receiving: Luke Wysong, 24 rec., 224 yds., 0 TDs
Tackles: Jerrick Reed II, 89
Sacks: Justin Harris, Ray Leutele, 4.0
Interceptions: Tavian Combs, Ronald Wilson, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Danny Gonzales
Record at School: 5-14 (2 years)
Career Record: 5-14 (2 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Derek Warehime
Defensive Coordinator: Rocky Long
Location: Albuquerque, NM
Stadium: University Stadium (39,224)

OFFENSE The easing of pandemic restrictions benefited New Mexico and head coach Danny Gonzales, as the Lobos finally entered a normal offseason weightlifting program. They hope a stronger offensive line will ignite a dormant run game and protect their dual-threat QBs.

The Lobos signed Kansas transfer Miles Kendrick to compete for the starting QB job and jump-start an offense that ranked last in total offense in the FBS in 2021. Kendrick played 17 games for the Jayhawks with two starts. CJ Montes and Isaiah Chavez are also in the mix. UNM still is looking to add another transfer to compete.

Nathaniel Jones and Bobby Wooden look to elevate a rushing attack that averaged only 120.8 yards per game in 2021. Jones, a 2021 redshirt, showed flashes as a freshman in 2020 with 232 yards and four TDs. Chad Alexander, Peyton Dixon and junior college transfer Sherod White also will vie for playing time.

The Lobos have some pass-catching weapons. Luke Wysong and Jace Taylor have starting experience, and Arizona State transfer Geordon Porter adds depth. Trace Bruckler, converted WR Elijah Queen and juco transfer Will Dennis are the tight ends.

The offensive line, a liability in 2021, should improve, despite fielding five new starters. Juco transfers Collin James, DJ Wingfield and J.C. Davis add size that UNM lacked during Gonzales' first two seasons.

DEFENSE UNM needs pass rushers to create the pressure that defensive coordinator Rocky Long's scheme requires to continue its upward trend. Senior left end Jake Saltonstall is a returning two-year starter with 4.5 career sacks. Sophomores Bryce Santana and UCLA transfer Tyler Kiehne will play at nose. Kyler Drake and Justin Harris will vie for time at right end; Harris recorded four sacks last year.

Linebacker is the defense's strength, especially given senior right LB Reco Hannah's return from a significant knee injury last season. MLB Ray Leutele and left LB Syaire Riley are veteran starters. Cody Moon, Dion Hunter and Alec Marenco provide depth.

The secondary returns a key veteran in senior right Wolf safety Jerrick Reed II, the team leader in tackles in 2021 and a 2020 first-team All-MW selection. Sophomore Ronald Wilson will start at left Wolf safety. Gonzales thinks junior Tavian Combs could have a strong season at the Lobo back position. Donte Martin is a three-year starter at right cornerback.

SPECIALISTS Senior George Steinkamp, the team's kickoff man last season, will win the kicking duties if he can show some consistency. Junior Aaron Rodriguez is slated to return as punter. Wysong, Jones and Martin give the Lobos a trio of threats in the return game.

FINAL ANALYSIS Rebuilding efforts have been stymied by UNM's inability to implement a strength-training regimen since the pandemic began. The Lobos desperately need to improve on offense, but if the defense continues its progress, UNM should compete in several games.

JERRICK REED II

New Mexico Athletics

> "The offense really struggled last season. The good news is that almost every staff in this league has stolen something from (DC) Rocky Long at some point. He's the master."
>
> —An opposing MW assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Christian Ellis, S, Jacksonville, FL	★★★
2	David Rowaiye, DL, Oklahoma City, OK	★★★
3	AJ Haulcy, S, Missouri City, TX	★★★
4	Christian Washington, RB, La Mesa, CA	★★★
5	Marquis Jones, LB, Ocala, FL	★★★
6	DJ Wingfield, OL, Torrance, CA	★★★
7	Jer'Marius Lewis, ATH, Summit, MS	★★★
8	Donald Dixon III, OL, Oxnard, CA	★★★
9	Kalen Woods, ATH, Oakland, CA	★★★
10	Max Elkman, DL, Dallas, TX	★★★

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (4)

WR	8	Geordon Porter (Sr.)	87	Andrew Erickson (Jr.)
WR	**15**	**Luke Wysong (So.)**	82	Austin Erickson (So.)
WR	**3**	**Jace Taylor (Jr.)**	24	Keyonta Lanier (So.)
LT	75	J.C. Davis (So.)	78	Arrison Cole (Fr.)
LG	70	Isaiah Sillemon (Fr.)	**67**	**Isaak Gutierrez (So.)**
C	71	Collin James (So.)	74	Greg Brown II (So.)
RG	68	Shancco Matautia (Fr.)	79	Walter Baca (So.)
RT	73	DJ Wingfield (Jr.)	72	Jer'Marques Bailey (Fr.)
TE	85	Trace Bruckler (So.)	81	Elijah Queen (Jr.)
QB	5	Miles Kendrick (Sr.)	11	CJ Montes (Fr.)
RB	25	Nathaniel Jones (So.)	4	Bobby Wooden (Jr.)

DEFENSE (7)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	**95**	**Jake Saltonstall (Sr.)**	93	Jaden Phillips (So.)
NT	51	Bryce Santana (So.)	56	Tyler Kiehne (Fr.)
DE	45	Kyler Drake (So.)	97	Justin Harris (Sr.)
OLB	44	Reco Hannah (Sr.)	58	Cody Moon (So.)
MLB	**30**	**Ray Leutele (Jr.)**	42	Dion Hunter (Fr.)
OLB	**36**	**Syaire Riley (Jr.)**	18	Alec Marenco (So.)
CB	21	A.J. Odums (So.)	23	Hunter Sellers (So.)
CB	**8**	**Donte Martin (Sr.)**	11	Xavier Hailey (Fr.)
LOBO	**7**	**Tavian Combs (Jr.)**	38	David Scott-Murphy (Fr.)
WOLF	**14**	**Ronald Wilson (So.)**	16	Benji Johnson (Fr.)
WOLF	**9**	**Jerrick Reed II (Sr.)**	22	Christian Ellis (Fr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	35	George Steinkamp (Sr.)	KR	15	Luke Wysong (So.)
P	10	Aaron Rodriguez (Jr.)	PR	15	Luke Wysong (So.)

UTAH STATE AGGIES

National Forecast: 56 • MW Mountain Prediction: 3 • Projected Record: 8-4, 6-2 MW

2022 SCHEDULE

Aug. 27	UConn
Sept. 3	at Alabama
Sept. 10	Weber State
Sept. 24	UNLV
Sept. 29	at BYU
Oct. 8	Air Force
Oct. 15	at Colorado State
Oct. 22	at Wyoming
Nov. 5	New Mexico
Nov. 12	at Hawaii
Nov. 19	San Jose State
Nov. 26	at Boise State

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 11-3, 7-2 MWC

Sept. 4	at Washington State	W	26-23
Sept. 10	North Dakota	W	48-24
Sept. 18	at Air Force	W	49-45
Sept. 25	Boise State	L	3-27
Oct. 1	BYU	L	20-34
Oct. 16	at UNLV	W	28-24
Oct. 22	Colorado State	W	26-24
Oct. 30	Hawaii	W	51-31
Nov. 6	at New Mexico State	W	35-13
Nov. 13	at San Jose State	W	48-17
Nov. 20	Wyoming	L	17-44
Nov. 26	at New Mexico	W	35-10
Dec. 4	at San Diego State #	W	46-13
Dec. 18	vs. Oregon State %	W	24-13

#MW Championship %LA Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MW	NATIONAL
Scoring	32.6 ppg	3	33
Rushing	142.1 ypg	6	85
Passing	303.4 ypg	3	15
Total	445.6 ypg	2	22

DEFENSE	PER GAME	MW	NATIONAL
Scoring	24.4 ppg	6	48
Rushing	161.9 ypg	8	84
Passing	230.9 ypg	8	70
Total	392.7 ypg	9	77

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	MW	NATIONAL
+2	+0.14	6	60

STAT CORNER

31.5%

Utah State's defense held opponents to a 31.5 percent third-down conversion rate, fourth in college football.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Logan Bonner, 430-263-3,628-12, 36 TDs
Rushing: Calvin Tyler Jr., 196 att., 884 yds., 7 TDs
Receiving: Justin McGriff, 35 rec., 414 yds., 6 TDs
Tackles: Hunter Reynolds, 83
Sacks: Byron Vaughns, 4.0
Interceptions: Ajani Carter, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Blake Anderson
Record at School: 11-3 (1 year)
Career Record: 62-40 (8 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Anthony Tucker
Defensive Coordinator: Ephraim Banda
Location: Logan, UT
Stadium: Maverik Stadium (25,100)

OFFENSE The quarterback position at Utah State is loaded with talent. However, some receiving targets will need to emerge after the departure of a trio who combined for 206 catches, 3,328 yards and 31 TDs last season.

Logan Bonner, a transfer from Arkansas State, won the quarterback job and went on to set five single-season records at USU, passing for 3,628 yards and 36 TDs. He was the MVP of the MW Championship Game but hurt his knee early in the LA Bowl vs. Oregon State and missed spring ball. He should be ready for the opener.

Should Bonner not be ready, LA Bowl MVP Cooper Legas will be. The junior had seen very little time before getting his shot in the bowl, and he shined. He and Wyoming transfer Levi Williams, who started six games last season for the Cowboys, both had good springs.

Maryland transfer Brian Cobbs and Alabama transfer Xavier Williams were brought in along with juco transfer Terrell Vaughn to join veteran receivers Justin McGriff and Kyle Van Leeuwen. McGriff caught 35 passes with six TDs last season.

Running back Calvin Tyler Jr. rushed for 884 yards and will have five starters on the offensive line back to block for him, including Alfred Edwards and Quazzel White, who earned all-league honorable mention honors.

DEFENSE Defensive end Byron Vaughns, who was the MW Championship Game MVP, had another outstanding spring. He recorded 10.5 tackles for a loss and 4.0 sacks last year. He is joined up front by tackle Hale Motu'apuaka and Nevada transfer Daniel Grzesiak.

AJ Vongphachanh will anchor a less experienced corps of linebackers. He is the second-leading returning tackler with 55 stops, and he led the Aggies in tackles in the shortened 2020 season.

Hunter Reynolds is playing Striker, which is a linebacker/safety hybrid, and is the top tackler returning from last season (83). Ajani Carter, who picked off three passes last year as a safety, has moved to cornerback. Fellow cornerback Michael Anyanwu adds experience as a returning starter. Miami transfer Gurvan Hall Jr., will help in the secondary.

SPECIALISTS Placekicker Connor Coles, who led the team in scoring with 112 points last season, is back, as is punter Stephen Kotsanlee. The Aggies will have to replace All-America kickoff returner Savon Scarver and also find a punt returner.

FINAL ANALYSIS After one of their worst seasons in decades, the Aggies bounced back to have arguably their best-ever campaign in 2021. USU won its first Mountain West championship, recorded its first victory against a ranked opponent in six years, won a bowl game, beat two Power 5 conference teams in the same season and finished ranked No. 24 in both polls.

For the first time in five years, USU will have the same offensive, defensive and special teams coordinators, adding stability. With key transfers joining an experienced team, the Aggies should once again contend for a league title.

LOGAN BONNER

> "They have a unique offense that was difficult for a lot of teams to prep for last season. They're also doing an exceptional job at working the portal right now."
>
> —An opposing MW assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Tavo Motuapuaka, OT, Mililani, HI	★★★
2	Weylin Lapuaho, OL, South Jordan, UT	★★★
3	Irae Leilua, OL, Provo, UT	★★★
4	Adam Tomczyk, DL, Los Alamitos, CA	★★★
5	Jordan Drew, ATH, Tulsa, OK	★★★
6	James Aloisio, OT, Provo, UT	★★★
7	Bishop Davenport, QB, Spring, TX	★★★
8	Robert Briggs, ATH, Bellville, TX	★★★
9	Lofa Fonoti-Maikui, LB, Layton, UT	★★★
10	Teague Andersen, OL, Lehi, UT	★★★

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)

WR	9	Kyle Van Leeuwen (Jr.)	3	Xavier Williams (Jr.)
WR	0	Brian Cobbs (Sr.)	18	NyNy Davis (Fr.)
WR	**10**	**Justin McGriff (Sr.)**	16	Terrell Vaughn (Jr.)
LT	**72**	**Alfred Edwards III (Sr.)**	**56**	**Cole Motes (So.)**
LG	79	Wade Meacham (Sr.)	75	Cade Parrish (Fr.)
C	**74**	**Chandler Dolphin (Sr.)**	61	Weylin Lapuaho (Fr.)
RG	**51**	**Quazzel White (Sr.)**	60	Wyatt Bowles (Sr.)
RT	**78**	**Jacob South (Sr.)**	77	Calvin Knapp (Jr.)
TE	83	Josh Sterzer (Jr.)	85	Parker Buchanan (Fr.)
QB	**1**	**Logan Bonner (Sr.)**	5	Cooper Legas (Jr.)
RB	**4**	**Calvin Tyler Jr. (Sr.)**	29	Pailate Makakona (Sr.)

DEFENSE (5)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	**0**	**Patrick Joyner Jr. (Jr.)**	9	Daniel Grzesiak (Jr.)
DT	**92**	**Hale Motu'apuaka (Sr.)**	90	Phillip Paea (Sr.)
DT	96	Poukesi Vakauta (Jr.)	95	Tavian Coleman (So.)
DE	11	Byron Vaughns (Jr.)	46	Addison Trupp (Jr.)
LB	47	Kaleo Neves (Jr.)	5	Lofa Fonoti-Maikui (Fr.)
LB	**10**	**AJ Vongphachanh (Sr.)**	40	Sione Moa (Fr.)
LB	53	Kina Maile (Jr.)	8	MJ Tafisi (Jr.)
CB	**22**	**Michael Anyanwu (Sr.)**	39	Jaden Smith (Jr.)
CB	12	Ajani Carter (Sr.)	21	Andre Grayson (Sr.)
STR	**27**	**Hunter Reynolds (Sr.)**	1	Anthony Switzer (Jr.)
S	6	Gurvan Hall Jr. (Jr.)	23	Dominic Tatum (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	59	Connor Coles (Sr.)	KR	18	NyNy Davis (Fr.)
P	63	Stephen Kotsanlee (Jr.)	PR	31	Cooper Jones (Sr.)

Brandon Sloter/Icon Sportswire via Getty Images

WYOMING COWBOYS

National Forecast: 95 • MW Mountain Prediction: 5 • Projected Record: 5-7, 4-4 MW

2022 SCHEDULE

Aug. 27	at Illinois
Sept. 3	Tulsa
Sept. 10	Northern Colorado
Sept. 17	Air Force
Sept. 24	at BYU
Oct. 1	San Jose State
Oct. 8	at New Mexico
Oct. 22	Utah State
Oct. 29	at Hawaii
Nov. 12	at Colorado State
Nov. 19	Boise State
Nov. 26	at Fresno State

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 7-6, 2-6 MW

Sept. 4	Montana State	W	19-16
Sept. 11	at Northern Illinois	W	50-43
Sept. 18	Ball State	W	45-12
Sept. 25	at UConn	W	24-22
Oct. 9	at Air Force	L	14-24
Oct. 16	Fresno State	L	0-17
Oct. 23	New Mexico	L	3-14
Oct. 30	at San Jose State	L	21-27
Nov. 6	Colorado State	W	31-17
Nov. 12	at Boise State	L	13-23
Nov. 20	at Utah State	W	44-17
Nov. 27	Hawaii	L	14-38
Dec. 21	vs. Kent State #	W	52-38

#Famous Idaho Potato Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MW	NATIONAL
Scoring	25.4 ppg	8	85
Rushing	211.7 ypg	2	20
Passing	162.7 ypg	10	117
Total	374.4 ypg	8	84

DEFENSE	PER GAME	MW	NATIONAL
Scoring	23.7 ppg	5	43
Rushing	180.6 ypg	11	98
Passing	189.8 ypg	1	12
Total	370.4 ypg	7	55

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	MW	NATIONAL
-3	-0.23	7	83

STAT CORNER

73

Wyoming's passing efficiency (-0.041 EPA/play, 94th nationally) ranked 73 spots below its rushing efficiency (0.057 EPA/play, 21st).

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: None
Rushing: Titus Swen, 132 att., 785 yds., 7 TDs
Receiving: Joshua Cobbs, 25 rec., 245 yds., 1 TD
Tackles: Easton Gibbs, 90
Sacks: Cole Godbout, 5.0
Interceptions: 3 players tied with 1

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Craig Bohl
Record at School: 45-50 (8 years)
Career Record: 149-82 (19 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Tim Polasek
Defensive Coordinator: Jay Sawvel
Location: Laramie, WY
Stadium: War Memorial Stadium (29,181)

OFFENSE The likely candidate to start at quarterback is junior Andrew Peasley, a transfer from Utah State who is a dual-threat. Evan Svoboda is a junior college transfer who at 6'5", 240, has some of the physical tools that remind Wyoming fans of Josh Allen, but he's also raw.

Xazavian Valladay left Wyoming for Arizona State ranked No. 2 on the school's all-time rushing list. The Cowboys should still be solid with junior Titus Swen, who was second on the team with 785 yards and a team-high seven rushing TDs. Wyoming is high on some younger backs such as sophomore Dawaiian McNeely and redshirt freshmen D.Q. James and Jordon Vaughn.

Wyoming was one of the worst passing teams in the country last season (162.7 yards per game). Sophomore Joshua Cobbs, at 6'4", 204, is the leading returning receiver with 25 catches for 245 yards. Who else steps up at receiver is a big question, but the Cowboys have depth at tight end with juniors Treyton Welch and Colin O'Brien.

Junior right tackle Frank Crum and senior left guard Eric Abojei anchor an offensive line that lost a lot of experience. Sophomore center Latrell Bible and junior guard Zach Watts have the inside track at their positions and have starting experience.

DEFENSE Logan Wilson and Chad Muma were middle linebackers who were selected in the NFL Draft in 2020 and 2022, respectively. The next in line could be sophomore Easton Gibbs, who has moved over from the weakside spot. Gibbs was second on the team to Muma last season in tackles (90) and tackles for a loss (seven).

The Cowboys should be strong in the middle with junior Cole Godbout (five sacks last season) and sophomore Jordan Bertagnole, but the Cowboys must establish some depth behind that duo. Graduation and the portal took away a lot of experience at defensive end. Sophomore DeVonne Harris is the most experienced with 16 games but no starts.

Wyoming lost its starting cornerbacks to transfer but went to the portal to find replacements in senior Deron Harrell (Wisconsin) and junior Jakorey Hawkins (Ole Miss). Cameron Stone saw some playing time last season in a reserve role. The coaching staff is high on free safety Isaac White. Wyett Ekeler, the brother of Chargers running back Austin Ekeler, could be the starting strong safety.

SPECIALISTS Sophomore John Hoyland was 10-of-14 on field goals and made all 40 of his extra-point attempts last season. Sophomore Ralph Fawaz averaged 42.5 yards in his first season as the Cowboys' punter. Stone had a 99-yard kickoff return for a TD last season.

FINAL ANALYSIS Wyoming has played in four bowls over the last six seasons — a first in school history. For the Cowboys to go bowling again this season, a lot of new faces — and a few familiar ones — must take on bigger roles. If the Cowboys can be more balanced on offense and continue to be stingy defensively, gaining bowl eligibility is possible.

TITUS SWEN

AP Photo/Steve Conner

> "One of the most well-coached teams in the Group of Five. They're disciplined, they don't make costly mistakes and the defense really buys into the culture there."
>
> —An opposing MW assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	DeShawn Woods, OL, Omaha, NE	★★★★
2	Caleb Merritt, WR, Saint Louis, MO	★★★
3	Caden Becker, QB, Omaha, NE	★★★
4	TJ Urban, S, Omaha, NE*	★★★
5	Wes King, DL, Appleton, WI	★★★
6	Rex Johnsen, OL, Logan, IA	★★★
7	Mykel Janise, OT, Beaumont, TX	★★★
8	Josh Dixon, CB, McKinney, TX	★★★
9	Luke Sandy, DL, Parker, CO	★★★
10	Cayden Hawkins, LB, Littleton, CO	★★★

*junior college transfer

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (3)

WR	8	Joshua Cobbs (So.)	11	Wyatt Wieland (Jr.)
WR	9	Alex Brown (So.)	16	Gunner Gentry (Jr.)
LT	71	Carlos Harrison (So.)	50	Jack Lookabaugh (So.)
LG	69	Eric Abojei (Sr.)	64	Kohl Herbolsheimer (So.)
C	58	Latrell Bible (So.)	60	Marco Machado (Jr.)
RG	65	Zach Watts (Jr.)	77	Nofoafia Tulafono (So.)
RT	**75**	**Frank Crum (Jr.)**	71	Carlos Harrison (So.)
TE	**81**	**Treyton Welch (Jr.)**	88	Colin O'Brien (Jr.)
QB	6	Andrew Peasley (Jr.)	17	Evan Svoboda (So.)
RB	2	Titus Swen (Jr.)	30	Dawaiian McNeely (So.)
FB	**80**	**Parker Christensen (So.)**	36	Caleb Driskill (So.)

DEFENSE (2)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	93	DeVonne Harris (So.)	44	Oluwaseyi Omotosho (Fr.)
NT	**94**	**Cole Godbout (Jr.)**	90	Gavin Meyer (So.)
DT	96	Jordan Bertagnole (So.)	95	Caleb Robinson (So.)
DE	54	Sabastian Harsh (So.)	86	Braden Siders (Fr.)
MLB	**28**	**Easton Gibbs (So.)**	43	Shae Suiaunoa (So.)
WLB	25	Cole DeMarzo (So.)	33	Connor Shay (So.)
CB	5	Deron Harrell (Sr.)	12	Cameron Stone (So.)
CB	7	Jakorey Hawkins (Jr.)	13	Zaire Jackson (Fr.)
NB	2	Keonte Glinton (So.)	30	Buck Coors (Fr.)
SS	31	Wyett Ekeler (So.)	3	Koa McIntyre (Fr.)
FS	42	Isaac White (So.)	14	Miles Williams (Sr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	46	John Hoyland (So.)	KR	12	Cameron Stone (So.)
P	27	Ralph Fawaz (So.)	PR	12	Cameron Stone (So.)

FRESNO STATE BULLDOGS

National Forecast: 35 • MW West Prediction: 1 • Projected Record: 9-4, 6-2 MW

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Cal Poly
Sept. 10	Oregon State
Sept. 17	at USC
Oct. 1	at Connecticut
Oct. 8	at Boise State
Oct. 15	San Jose State
Oct. 22	at New Mexico
Oct. 29	San Diego State
Nov. 5	Hawaii
Nov. 12	at UNLV
Nov. 19	at Nevada
Nov. 26	Wyoming

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 10-3, 6-2 MWC

Aug. 28	UConn	W	45-0
Sept. 4	at Oregon	L	24-31
Sept. 11	Cal Poly	W	63-10
Sept. 18	at UCLA	W	40-37
Sept. 24	UNLV	W	38-30
Oct. 2	at Hawaii	L	24-27
Oct. 16	at Wyoming	W	17-0
Oct. 23	Nevada	W	34-32
Oct. 30	at San Diego State	W	30-20
Nov. 6	Boise State	L	14-40
Nov. 13	New Mexico	W	34-7
Nov. 25	at San Jose State	W	40-9
Dec. 18	vs. UTEP #	W	31-24

#New Mexico Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MW	NATIONAL
Scoring	33.4 ppg	2	26
Rushing	138.2 ypg	7	90
Passing	326.7 ypg	2	9
Total	464.8 ypg	1	14

DEFENSE	PER GAME	MW	NATIONAL
Scoring	20.5 ppg	4	20
Rushing	125.1 ypg	3	24
Passing	222.0 ypg	7	58
Total	347.1 ypg	3	32

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	MW	NATIONAL
+2	+0.15	5	53

STAT CORNER

46.3%

Fresno State's passing offense ranked ninth overall and fifth in the G5, averaging a 46.3 percent success rate and a 65.2 percent completion percentage.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Jake Haener, 490-329-4,096-9, 33 TDs
Rushing: Jordan Mims, 127 att., 710 yds., 6 TDs
Receiving: Jalen Cropper, 85 rec., 899 yds., 11 TDs
Tackles: Evan Williams, 91
Sacks: David Perales, 7.0
Interceptions: Evan Williams, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Jeff Tedford
Record at School: 26-14 (3 years)
Career Record: 108-71 (14 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Kirby Moore
Defensive Coordinator: Kevin Coyle
Location: Fresno, CA
Stadium: Bulldog Stadium (40,727)

OFFENSE Jake Haener helms what should be one of the West Coast's most explosive offenses, but not without some drama. The second-team All-Mountain West quarterback entered the transfer portal when head coach Kalen DeBoer left for Washington but changed his mind after Jeff Tedford returned to replace DeBoer.

Last season, Haener became the first Fresno State passer to surpass 4,000 yards since Derek Carr in 2013, completing 67.1 percent of his passes for 4,096 yards, 33 touchdowns and nine interceptions. A gutsy performance against UCLA brought Haener national attention and even fleeting mention as a Heisman candidate.

Jalen Cropper and Josh Kelly, Haener's primary receivers, are back. Cropper caught 85 passes for 899 yards and 11 TDs, while Kelly had 52 catches for 778 yards and three TDs. Lining up in the slot will be Nikko Remigio, a midyear transfer who was productive at Cal. Each should thrive in Kirby Moore's motion-heavy scheme, derived from the first-year coordinator's Boise State roots.

Jordan Mims' 236 all-purpose yards and three TDs in the New Mexico Bowl showed that he could handle a heavy workload at tailback. The big question is whether a relatively inexperienced offensive line is up to the task.

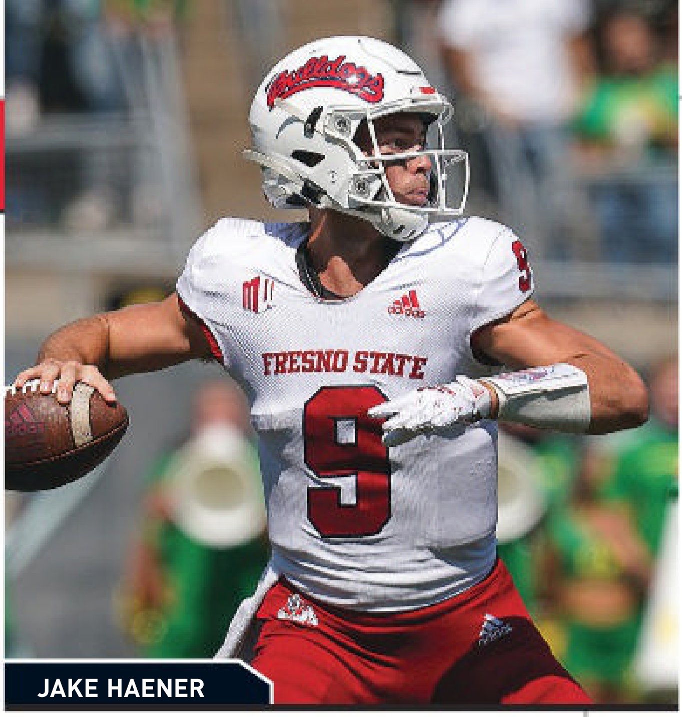
DEFENSE Fresno State returns its four leading tacklers from 2021 (first-team All-MW safety Evan Williams; linebackers Malachi Langley and Levelle Bailey; end David Perales), its sacks and hurries leader (Perales) and its interceptions leader (Williams). Tedford kept the same theme by bringing back coordinator Kevin Coyle to the same job he held from 1997-2000 and alumni position coaches in Tim Skipper and Jethro Franklin.

Williams, safety Elijah Gates and cornerbacks Bralyn Lux and Cale Sanders Jr., who played in 13 games as a true freshman, form a solid secondary. There is returning experience at linebacker, where Justin Houston will play a slight variation of his familiar hybrid position.

Besides Perales and Leonard Payne, there aren't a lot of proven commodities up front. Fresno State will need immediate impacts from transfers such as Evan Bennett (Oregon State) and Joshua Pakola (Stanford).

SPECIALISTS Not since 2013 have the Bulldogs returned a punt for a TD, and the drought on kickoffs is even longer (2008). Those duties now fall to Remigio, whose 29.1-yard kickoff return average for Cal in 2021 ranked 11th in FBS. Kicker Abraham Montano appeared in four games and was perfect on field goals (5-of-5) and PATs (14-of-14).

FINAL ANALYSIS Tedford's second stint at his alma mater has to feel less daunting than the first. In 2017, Tedford took over a 1–11 squad and engineered an instant turnaround before stepping away for health reasons. This time, Fresno State is coming off a 10–3 campaign and features a proven offense that ranked first in the MW in yards and second in points per game. Anything less than a MW title game appearance will qualify as a disappointment.


JAKE HAENER

Fresno State Athletics

> "With a new staff coming in, they need to figure out what kind of defense works best opposite that offensive scheme. That side of the ball is a huge question mark right now."
>
> —An opposing MW assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Jalen Moss, WR, Menlo Park, CA	★★★
2	Joshua Wood, QB, Graham, WA	★★★
3	Jacob Holmes, DL, Chandler, AZ	★★★
4	Jomarion Briggs, CB, Stockton, CA	★★★
5	Miles Bailey, DL, Benicia, CA	★★★
6	Nathan Acevedo, WR, San Diego, CA	★★★
7	Marcus Simien, OL, Patterson, CA	★★★
8	Anthony LaFrance, OT, Chino, CA*	★★★
9	Nate Maier, OT, Lake Arrowhead, CA	★★★
10	Tim Thomas, LB, Stockton, CA	★★★

*junior college transfer

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	**5**	**Jalen Cropper (Sr.)**	8	Ty Jones (Sr.)
WR	1	Nikko Remigio (Sr.)	3	Erik Brooks (Sr.)
WR	**11**	**Josh Kelly (Jr.)**	2	Zane Pope (Jr.)
LT	75	Braylen Nelson (So.)	**72**	**Dontae Bull (Sr.)**
LG	56	Pedro Timoteo (Fr.)	63	Daniel Taumalolo (Jr.)
C	**54**	**Bula Schmidt (Sr.)**	50	Tyrone Sampson Jr. (Sr.)
RG	**51**	**Mose Vavao (Jr.)**	79	Joseph Church (So.)
RT	77	Toreon Penright (So.)	71	Rolan Fullwood (Fr.)
TE	87	Raymond Pauwels Jr. (Sr.)	84	Tre Watson (So.)
QB	**9**	**Jake Haener (Sr.)**	13	Jaylen Henderson (Fr.)
RB	7	Jordan Mims (Sr.)	6	Jordan Wilmore (Jr.)

DEFENSE (7)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	**99**	**David Perales (Sr.)**	5	Devo Bridges (Jr.)
DT	**55**	**Leonard Payne Jr. (Jr.)**	17	Johnny Hudson Jr. (Jr.)
DT	0	Evan Bennett (Jr.)	91	Matt Lawson (Sr.)
DE	18	Isaiah Johnson (Sr.)	52	Da'Marcus Johnson (Sr.)
LB	**6**	**Levelle Bailey (Sr.)**	19	Zeke Branham (Fr.)
LB	35	Malachi Langley (Jr.)	1	Ray Scott (Sr.)
LB	**13**	**Justin Houston (So.)**	25	Emari Pait (Fr.)
CB	11	Cale Sanders Jr. (So.)	20	Cam Lockridge (Jr.)
CB	**33**	**Bralyn Lux (Jr.)**	8	Jalen Williams (Fr.)
SS	**2**	**Elijah Gates (Sr.)**	10	Kosi Agina (Jr.)
FS	**32**	**Evan Williams (Sr.)**	27	LJ Early (Sr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	48	Abraham Montano (So.)	**KR**	1	Nikko Remigio (Sr.)
P	45	Carson King (Sr.)	**PR**	1	Nikko Remigio (Sr.)

HAWAII RAINBOW WARRIORS

National Forecast: 127 • MW West Prediction: 6 • Projected Record: 3-10, 1-7 MW

OFFENSE Eighteen seasons after setting the NCAA career passing record as Hawaii's quarterback with 17,072 yards (a mark since broken by Case Keenum), Timmy Chang returns as the Rainbow Warriors head coach. For Chang, repairing an offense torn apart by the school's most tumultuous football chapter in 45 years will be Job 1.

Ian Shoemaker, who directed FCS Eastern Washington's high-flying offense, was brought in as offensive coordinator to aid in the rebuild.

Quarterback Chevan Cordeiro, who started parts of three seasons, transferred to rival San Jose State, and heir apparent A.J. Bianco de-committed and eventually signed with conference foe Nevada. That leaves Washington State transfer Cammon Cooper and 2021 backup Brayden Schager, who started three games as a freshman, to compete for the top job. Pittsburgh backup Joey Yellen, formerly of Arizona State, is also transferring in, though he may need a waiver to play immediately. If he gets it, he may move to the front of the line.

The QB will have the benefit of three offensive line pillars — tackles Ilm Manning and Micah Vanterpool and guard Solo Vaipulu (103 career starts among them).

Dedrick Parson, who scored eight touchdowns, takes over at running back, but none of the other returnees at the position had more than six carries in 2021. Zion Bowens (12 receptions) and Jonah Panoke (11) figure prominently at receiver. Caleb Phillips (17) is back at tight end as that position takes on a larger role.

DEFENSE Jacob Yoro steps up to coordinator and assumes the challenge of turning around a unit that ranked 113th in total defense and saw 10 starters depart. The prime building blocks are defensive lineman Blessman Ta'ala, linebackers Penei Pavihi and Isaiah Tufaga and safety Tiger Peterson, as well as some transfer reinforcements at cornerback. The addition of Nebraska transfer Wynden Ho'ohuli should further stamp the linebackers as the defense's strongest unit.

Iowa State transfer Virdel Edwards II figures in at cornerback, and the depleted position gets a further boost this summer when transfers JoJo Forest (Oregon State), McKenzie Barnes (Arizona), Kaulana Makaula (USC) and Wylan Free (Fresno State) are scheduled to arrive.

SPECIALISTS Filling the shoes of Calvin Turner Jr., one of the top return specialists in UH history, will be a chore. Dior Scott, Jalen Perdue and James Phillips are the top candidates. Matthew Shipley made 18 of his 21 field-goal attempts and all 42 PATs and may again be asked to handle the punting chores.

FINAL ANALYSIS Chang helped quarterback the Warriors to 39 victories in his tenure (2000-04) as a player and debuts as a head coach after assistant posts at Nevada and, briefly, Colorado State. But with a road stop at Michigan and plenty of pieces to pick up after the turmoil that preceded his return, Chang figures to be hard-pressed to deliver a winning season in his inaugural campaign.

2022 SCHEDULE

Aug. 27	Vanderbilt
Sept. 3	WKU
Sept. 10	at Michigan
Sept. 17	Duquesne
Sept. 24	at New Mexico State
Oct. 8	at San Diego State
Oct. 15	Nevada
Oct. 22	at Colorado State
Oct. 29	Wyoming
Nov. 5	at Fresno State
Nov. 12	Utah State
Nov. 19	UNLV
Nov. 26	at San Jose State

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 6-7, 3-5 MWC

Aug. 28	at UCLA	L	10-44
Sept. 4	Portland State	W	49-35
Sept. 11	at Oregon State	L	27-45
Sept. 18	San Jose State	L	13-17
Sept. 25	at New Mexico St.	W	41-21
Oct. 2	Fresno State	W	27-24
Oct. 16	at Nevada	L	17-34
Oct. 23	New Mexico State	W	48-34
Oct. 30	at Utah State	L	31-51
Nov. 6	San Diego State	L	10-17
Nov. 13	at UNLV	L	13-27
Nov. 20	Colorado State	W	50-45
Nov. 27	at Wyoming	W	38-14

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MW	NATIONAL
Scoring	28.8 ppg	6	63
Rushing	142.8 ypg	5	84
Passing	262.2 ypg	4	36
Total	405.0 ypg	6	63

DEFENSE	PER GAME	MW	NATIONAL
Scoring	31.4 ppg	11	100
Rushing	156.3 ypg	6	71
Passing	290.0 ypg	12	127
Total	446.3 ypg	12	113

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	MW	NATIONAL
-3	-0.23	7	83

STAT CORNER

252

The Warriors had 58 plays of 20-plus yards, 40th overall, but 252 of their passing plays went for negative EPA, including 12 interceptions, 26 sacks and seven fumbles.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Brayden Schager, 108-65-615-5, 2 TDs
Rushing: Dedrick Parson, 117 att., 618 yds., 8 TDs
Receiving: Dedrick Parson, 28 rec., 279 yds., 1 TD
Tackles: Penei Pavihi, 47
Sacks: Isaiah Tufaga, 2.0
Interceptions: Hugh Nelson II, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Timmy Chang
Record at School: First Season
Career Record: First Season
Offensive Coordinator: Ian Shoemaker
Defensive Coordinators: Jacob Yoro
Location: Honolulu, HI
Stadium: Aloha Stadium (50,000)

AP Photo/Darryl Oumi

DEDRICK PARSON

> "If Hawaii is successful, it's because they have someone who knows the island and someone who's familiar with the Run & Shoot. Timmy Chang is both, so that's a good start."
>
> —An opposing MW assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Malaki Te'o, LB, Santa Ana, CA	★★★
2	Junior Ta'ase, OL, San Bernardino, CA	★★★
3	Noah Kema, LB, Lawrence, KS*	★★★
4	Kona Moore, S, Honolulu, HI	★★★
5	Malachi Finau, DL, Bellflower, CA	★★★
6	Cam'ron Bell, S, Valencia, CA*	★★★
7	Dean Briski, DL, Waipahu, HI	★★★
8	Ethan Spencer, OL, Honolulu, HI	★★
9	Demarii Blanks, LB, Belmont, CA*	n/r
10	Greyson Morgan, TE, Athens, TX*	n/r

*junior college transfer

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (4)

WR	88	Steven Fiso (Sr.)	27	Koali Nishigaya (So.)
WR	6	Zion Bowens (Sr.)	4	Jalen Walthall (Fr.)
WR	9	Jonah Panoke (Jr.)	8	Tamatoa Mokiao-Atimalala (Jr.)
LT	**75**	**Ilm Manning (Sr.)**	73	Nate Adams (Fr.)
LG	51	Maurice Ta'ala (So.)	58	Zhen Sotelo (Fr.)
C	61	Eliki Tanuvasa (Sr.)	78	Ka'ena Decambra (Fr.)
RG	**52**	**Solo Vaipulu (Sr.)**	69	Stephan Bernal-Wendt (Sr.)
RT	**71**	**Micah Vanterpool (Sr.)**	77	Austin Hopp (Sr.)
TE	**85**	**Caleb Phillips (Sr.)**	7	Jordan Murray (Sr.)
QB	12	Cammon Cooper (Jr.)	13	Brayden Schager (So.)
RB	31	Dedrick Parson (Sr.)	25	Dior Scott (Sr.)

DEFENSE (1)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	96	Andrew Choi (Sr.)	97	Zach Ritner (Sr.)
NT	90	John Tuitupou (Sr.)	98	Fo'i Shaw (Sr.)
DT	55	Blessman Ta'ala (Sr.)	44	Sonny Semeatu (Fr.)
DE	43	Tariq Jones (Fr.)	42	Jonah Kahahawai-Welch (Sr.)
LB	**1**	**Penei Pavihi (Sr.)**	11	Demarii Blanks (Jr.)
LB	17	Isaiah Tufaga (Sr.)	22	Wynden Ho'ohuli (Fr.)
CB		McKenzie Barnes (Sr.)	23	Virdel Edwards II (Jr.)
CB		Wylan Free (Sr.)	3	Hugh Nelson II (Sr.)
NB		JoJo Forest (Sr.)		Kaulana Makaula (So.)
S	21	Tiger Peterson (Jr.)	39	Kalamaku Kuewa (Sr.)
S	6	Riley Wilson (So.)	47	Noa Kamana (Sr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	2	Matthew Shipley (Jr.)	KR	13	Jalen Perdue (Sr.)
P	2	Matthew Shipley (Jr.)	PR	25	Dior Scott (Sr.)

NEVADA WOLF PACK

National Forecast: 114 • MW West Prediction: 5 • Projected Record: 5-7, 2-6 MW

2022 SCHEDULE

Aug. 27	at New Mexico State
Sept. 3	Texas State
Sept. 10	Incarnate Word
Sept. 17	at Iowa
Sept. 24	at Air Force
Oct. 8	Colorado State
Oct. 15	at Hawaii
Oct. 22	San Diego State
Oct. 29	at San Jose State
Nov. 12	Boise State
Nov. 19	Fresno State
Nov. 26	at UNLV

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 8-5, 5-3 MWC

Sept. 4	at California	W	22-17
Sept. 11	Idaho State	W	49-10
Sept. 18	at Kansas State	L	17-38
Oct. 2	at Boise State	W	41-31
Oct. 9	New Mexico State	W	55-28
Oct. 16	Hawaii	W	34-17
Oct. 23	at Fresno State	L	32-34
Oct. 29	UNLV	W	51-20
Nov. 6	San Jose State	W	27-24
Nov. 13	at San Diego State	L	21-23
Nov. 19	Air Force (ot)	L	39-41
Nov. 27	at Colorado State	W	52-10
Dec. 27	vs. Western Michigan #	L	24-52

#Quick Lane Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MW	NATIONAL
Scoring	35.7 ppg	1	17
Rushing	77.2 ypg	12	129
Passing	347.0 ypg	1	6
Total	424.2 ypg	3	48

DEFENSE	PER GAME	MW	NATIONAL
Scoring	26.5 ppg	8	70
Rushing	186.0 ypg	12	102
Passing	220.5 ypg	6	56
Total	406.5 ypg	10	87

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	MW	NATIONAL
+17	+1.31	1	1

STAT CORNER

31.1

Nevada ranked 23rd in the nation in starting field position, beginning drives on average at their own 31.1-yard line.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Nate Cox, 43-26-279-1, 2 TDs
Rushing: Toa Taua, 149 att., 720 yds., 6 TDs
Receiving: Toa Taua, 39 rec., 296 yds., 1 TD
Tackles: JoJuan Claiborne, 61
Sacks: Dom Peterson, 5.5
Interceptions: Tyson Williams, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Ken Wilson
Record at School: First Season
Career Record: First Season
Offensive Coordinator: Derek Sage
Defensive Coordinators: Kwame Agyeman, Mike Bethea
Location: Reno, NV
Stadium: Mackay Stadium (27,000)

OFFENSE First-year head coach Ken Wilson has deep Nevada roots, but if the former Oregon defensive coordinator is to succeed, he must quickly rebuild an offense that was among the best in the country a year ago. It won't be easy. Not with only two offensive starters returning.

At quarterback, 6'9" senior Nate Cox or Oklahoma State transfer Shane Illingworth will try to fill the sizable shoes of Carson Strong. Cox was Strong's primary backup and threw for 121 yards and a touchdown with a severely depleted roster in the Quick Lane Bowl. The talented Illingworth, who started three games for OSU during the past two seasons, will push him.

Senior backs Toa Taua and Devonte Lee form a strong backfield duo to build on. Taua ran for 720 yards and six touchdowns in 2021, and the bruising Lee added 331 rushing yards and five scores. But Nevada must replace 3,842 yards and 35 touchdowns of receiving production. Lightly used speedster Jamaal Bell and senior Tyrese Mack figure to be top targets, and the Wolf Pack are hoping B.J. Casteel, an Arizona transfer, will emerge.

The offensive line is a complete rebuild. Senior right tackle Aaron Frost will provide some stability as the lone returning starter.

DEFENSE Some key pieces return for first-year co-defensive coordinators Kwame Agyeman and Mike Bethea.

Super senior Dom Peterson is a disruptive force on the defensive line, ranking in the top 10 all-time in the Mountain West in career sacks (22) and tackles for a loss (42.5). He'll get help from Liberty transfer William Green Jr., along with returning veterans Christopher Love and Breylon Garcia.

Nevada had just four players at linebacker in spring ball who have seen any collegiate playing time. Senior Josiah Bradley should help stabilize the position, and juniors Davion Blackwell and Naki Mateialona are poised to see significant action.

The Wolf Pack do have some depth in the secondary, most notably in super seniors JoJuan Claiborne and Tyson Williams. The two safeties combined for 107 tackles and 10 pass breakups last year. Jaden Dedman, Isaiah Essissima, Bentlee Sanders and Christian Swint all return with experience.

SPECIALISTS Senior kicker Brandon Talton returns after a subpar season in which he hit 22-of-30 field goal tries, but he figures to bounce back as one of the best kickers in the country. Bell will lead the kickoff return team after being an honorable mention all-conference selection in the role in 2021, and he figures to be the favorite to return punts.

FINAL ANALYSIS Wilson spent years as an assistant under legendary coach Chris Ault, so he has seen success in Reno. But he has a monumental rebuild ahead of him with only two dozen returning lettermen. Wilson plugged holes with 14 incoming transfers, but a typically consistent Nevada program appears likely to finish below .500 for the first time since 2017.

DOM PETERSON

Loren Orr/Getty Images

> "They hired a great coach, and it went under the radar. They have a ton of guys leaving in the portal, so they're going to take a major step back in the short term."
>
> —An opposing MW assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Cameron Sampson, CB, Sacramento, CA	★★★
2	Elijah Barclay, WR, San Juan Capistrano, CA	★★★
3	Chris Smalley, ATH, Minden, NV	★★★
4	Ike Nnakenyi, Edge, Henderson, NV	★★★
5	KeeKee McQueen, CB, Spanaway, WA	★★★
6	Jonathan Maldonado, Edge, Arcadia, CA	★★★
7	A.J. Bianco, QB, Honolulu, HI	★★★
8	Keenan Speer-Johnson, WR, Beaverton, OR	★★★
9	Zac Welch, OL, El Dorado Hills, CA*	★★
10	Stone Combs, LB, Park City, UT	★★

*junior college transfer

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (2)				
WR	3	Jamaal Bell (Jr.)	80	Victor Snow (Fr.)
WR	8	Tyrese Mack (Sr.)		Marquis Ashley (So.)
WR	4	B.J. Casteel (Sr.)	18	Spencer Curtis (Jr.)
LT	71	Grant Starck (Jr.)	64	Kai Arneson (Fr.)
LG	68	Jacob Nunez (So.)	62	Frank Poso (Jr.)
C	56	Zac Welch (Jr.)	78	Andrew Madrigal (So.)
RG	77	Trey Hamilton (Sr.)	55	Joey Capra (So.)
RT	**65**	**Aaron Frost (Sr.)**	70	Isaiah World (So.)
TE	89	Cooper Shults (So.)	81	Carlton Brown III (So.)
QB	16	Nate Cox (Sr.)		Shane Illingworth (So.)
RB	**35**	**Toa Taua (Sr.)**	2	Devonte Lee (Sr.)

DEFENSE (4)				Returning Starters in **BOLD**
DE	40	Caleb Manson (So.)	92	Dion Washington (So.)
DT	**0**	**Dom Peterson (Sr.)**	97	Aaron Overton Jr. (So.)
DT	99	William Green Jr. (Sr.)	73	Christopher Love (Sr.)
DE	90	Breylon Garcia (Sr.)	92	Dion Washington (So.)
LB	36	Naki Mateialona (Jr.)	11	Marcel Walker (So.)
LB	34	Josiah Bradley (Sr.)	32	Drue Watts (So.)
LB	56	Adam Weynand (Jr.)	33	Davion Blackwell (Jr.)
CB	2	Isaiah Essissima (Sr.)	1	Darion Green-Warren (Fr.)
CB	**15**	**Jaden Dedman (Sr.)**	**20**	**Bentlee Sanders (Sr.)**
S	**8**	**JoJuan Claiborne (Sr.)**	5	Emany Johnson (Sr.)
S	6	Tyson Williams (Sr.)	38	Christian Swint (Sr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	43	Brandon Talton (Sr.)	**KR**	3	Jamaal Bell (Jr.)
P	48	Matt Freem (Sr.)	**PR**	3	Jamaal Bell (Jr.)

SAN DIEGO STATE AZTECS

National Forecast: 59 • MW West Prediction: 2 • Projected Record: 8-4, 5-3 MW

OFFENSE San Diego State will have a new starting quarterback for the fourth straight season. The difference this year is that it's a player with Power 5 starting experience in Virginia Tech graduate transfer Braxton Burmeister. The San Diego native returns home after starting all 12 regular-season games last year, passing for 1,960 yards with 14 TDs and four interceptions. Redshirt freshman Will Haskell has teased fans with his athleticism, and many are eager to see him in a starting role.

SDSU's reputation for its running game could take a backseat to its passing game for the first time in more than a decade. There is no 1,000-yard back returning for just the second time in a dozen seasons. That suggests the run game could be by committee, led by super seniors Chance Bell (341 yards, four TDs) and Jordan Byrd (246 yards, three TDs). A big back who bears watching is 220-pound redshirt freshman Jaylon Armstead.

The quarterbacks will benefit from the presence of senior WR Jesse Matthews (57 catches, 642 yards, nine TDs), a former walk-on. Tyrell Shavers, a 6'6" senior transfer from Mississippi State, caught on late last season and should be a second go-to guy.

DEFENSE A unit that ranked 12th in total defense (324.4 ypg) and 17th in scoring defense (19.8 ppg) will be without Mountain West Defensive Player of the Year Cameron Thomas — and could still be even better this season. Thomas left early for the 2022 NFL Draft, and three other starters graduated, but the Aztecs were bolstered by three defenders from the transfer portal.

Two of the transfers are brothers of Aztecs who will join them in the starting lineup, with senior Justus Tavai (a Hawaii transfer) joining Jonah Tavai on the defensive line and junior Cooper McDonald (Washington) joining Caden McDonald at linebacker.

Senior Patrick McMorris is a first-team All-MW safety who led the team with four interceptions, helping the Aztecs to a conference-high 17 picks. He leads a secondary that includes six players with starting experience.

SPECIALISTS Junior Jack Browning has the tall task of succeeding Ray Guy Award winner Matt Araiza, who departed early for the 2022 NFL Draft after setting a national record with a 51.2-yard punting average. Araiza also handled placekicking and kickoff duties, which Browning will assume as well. All-MW kick returner Jordan Byrd is a big-play threat.

FINAL ANALYSIS Success could hinge on a revamped offensive line with three new starters. If the line is at least adequate, then the offense should be improved and take some pressure off the defense. No one expects SDSU to match last season's school-record 12 victories, but double-digit wins for the sixth time in seven full seasons wouldn't be a surprise. It will help being home again. After two seasons playing at Carson's Dignity Health Sports Park, SDSU's $310 million Snapdragon Stadium debuts with the Sept. 3 season opener against Arizona.

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Arizona
Sept. 10	Idaho State
Sept. 17	at Utah
Sept. 24	Toledo
Oct. 1	at Boise State
Oct. 8	Hawaii
Oct. 22	at Nevada
Oct. 29	at Fresno State
Nov. 5	UNLV
Nov. 12	San Jose State
Nov. 19	at New Mexico
Nov. 26	Air Force

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 12-2, 7-1 MW

Sept. 4	New Mexico State	W	28-10
Sept. 11	at Arizona	W	38-14
Sept. 18	Utah (ot)	W	33-31
Sept. 25	Towson	W	48-21
Oct. 9	New Mexico	W	31-7
Oct. 15	at San Jose State (ot)	W	19-13
Oct. 23	at Air Force	W	20-14
Oct. 30	Fresno State	L	20-30
Nov. 6	at Hawaii	W	17-10
Nov. 13	Nevada	W	23-21
Nov. 19	at UNLV	W	28-20
Nov. 26	Boise State	W	27-16
Dec. 4	Utah State #	L	13-46
Dec. 21	vs. UTSA %	W	38-24

#MW Championship %Frisco Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MW	NATIONAL
Scoring	27.4 ppg	7	78
Rushing	174.3 ypg	3	54
Passing	167.9 ypg	9	115
Total	342.2 ypg	9	105
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**MW**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	19.8 ppg	3	17
Rushing	80.3 ypg	1	3
Passing	244.1 ypg	11	93
Total	324.4 ypg	2	12
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**MW**	**NATIONAL**
+10	+0.71	2	14

STAT CORNER

30.9%

San Diego State ranked third in run-stopping in 2021, holding opponents to a 30.9 percent rushing success rate.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Jalen Mayden, 6-5-50-0, 1 TD
Rushing: Chance Bell, 72 att., 341 yds., 4 TDs
Receiving: Jesse Matthews, 57 rec., 642 yds., 9 TDs
Tackles: Patrick McMorris, 90
Sacks: Jonah Tavai, 8.5
Interceptions: Patrick McMorris, 4

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Brady Hoke
Record at School: 29-18 (4 years)
Career Record: 94-78 (14+ years)
Offensive Coordinator: Jeff Hecklinski
Defensive Coordinator: Kurt Mattix
Location: San Diego, CA
Stadium: Snapdragon Stadium (35,000)

Peter Brouillet

KESHAWN BANKS

> "They can fall apart quick if you make their offense catch up. Otherwise, they're going to play perfect ball-control offense. They love a one-score game."
>
> —An opposing MW assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Lucky Sutton, RB, San Diego, CA	★★★
2	Hassan Mahasin, ATH, San Mateo, CA	★★★
3	Jacoby Kelly, WR, Los Angeles, CA	★★★
4	Josh Hunter, CB, Santa Ana, CA	★★★
5	Max Garrison, ATH, La Canada, CA	★★★
6	Logan Tanner, TE, Houston, TX	★★★
7	Laakea Kapoi, OT, Honolulu, HI	★★★
8	Sheldon Canley II, RB, Lompoc, CA	★★★
9	Chris Johnson, CB, Corona, CA	★★★
10	Ryan Henderson, DL, North Las Vegas, NV	★★★

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (3)

WR	45	**Jesse Matthews (Sr.)**	80	TJ Sullivan (Sr.)
WR	14	Tyrell Shavers (Sr.)	85	Josh Nicholson (Fr.)
WR	11	Brionne Penny (Jr.)	84	Darius De Los Reyes (So.)
LT	62	Jonathan Harrison (So.)	71	Zavier Leonard (Fr.)
LG	60	Cade Bennett (So.)	70	Christian Jones (Fr.)
C	72	**Alama Uluave (Sr.)**	68	Thomas Mirabella (So.)
RG	63	Ross Ulugalu-Maseuli (Fr.)	67	Kyle Trombley (Jr.)
RT	61	**Brandon Crenshaw-Dickson (Jr.)**	79	Joey Wright (So.)
TE	81	Mark Redman (Jr.)	82	Jay Rudolph (Jr.)
QB	5	Braxton Burmeister (Sr.)	3	Will Haskell (Fr.)
RB	21	Chance Bell (Sr.)	38	Jaylon Armstead (So.)

DEFENSE (7)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	2	**Keshawn Banks (Sr.)**	39	Garret Fountain (Jr.)
DT	66	**Jonah Tavai (Sr.)**	95	Nassir Sims (Jr.)
DE	91	Justus Tavai (Sr.)	90	Daniel Okpoko (Sr.)
SLB	54	**Caden McDonald (Sr.)**	57	Darrell Masaniai (So.)
MLB	55	Cooper McDonald (Jr.)	43	Seyddrick Lakalaka (Sr.)
WLB	46	**Michael Shawcroft (Sr.)**	44	Vai Kaho (Jr.)
CB	10	**Noah Tumblin (Jr.)**	12	Dallas Branch (Sr.)
CB	17	Noah Avinger (So.)	48	Adonis Brown (Sr.)
AZTEC	33	**Patrick McMorris (Sr.)**	19	Kyron White (Jr.)
SS	34	CJ Baskerville (So.)	11	Jatavious Magee (Fr.)
FS	27	**Cedarious Barfield (Sr.)**	31	Davaughn Celestine (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	13	Jack Browning (Jr.)	KR	15	Jordan Byrd (Sr.)
P	13	Jack Browning (Jr.)	PR	45	Jesse Matthews (Sr.)

SAN JOSE STATE SPARTANS

National Forecast: 101 • MW West Prediction: 3 • Projected Record: 6-6, 3-5 MW

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Portland State
Sept. 10	at Auburn
Sept. 24	Western Michigan
Oct. 1	at Wyoming
Oct. 8	UNLV
Oct. 15	at Fresno State
Oct. 22	at New Mexico State
Oct. 29	Nevada
Nov. 5	Colorado State
Nov. 12	at San Diego State
Nov. 19	at Utah State
Nov. 26	Hawaii

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 5-7, 3-5 MW

Aug. 28	Southern Utah	W	45-14
Sept. 4	at USC	L	7-30
Sept. 18	at Hawaii	W	17-13
Sept. 25	at Western Michigan	L	3-23
Oct. 2	New Mexico State	W	37-31
Oct. 9	at Colorado State	L	14-32
Oct. 15	San Diego State (ot)	L	13-19
Oct. 21	at UNLV	W	27-20
Oct. 30	Wyoming	W	27-21
Nov. 6	at Nevada	L	24-27
Nov. 13	Utah State	L	17-48
Nov. 25	Fresno State	L	9-40

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MW	NATIONAL
Scoring	20.0 ppg	11	118
Rushing	120.4 ypg	9	110
Passing	219.7 ypg	7	77
Total	340.1 ypg	10	108

DEFENSE	PER GAME	MW	NATIONAL
Scoring	26.5 ppg	7	68
Rushing	133.9 ypg	4	34
Passing	236.1 ypg	9	77
Total	370.0 ypg	6	54

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	MW	NATIONAL
-10	-0.83	12	123

STAT CORNER

31

San Jose State allowed just 31 plays of 20-plus yards in 2021, second fewest in the FBS. The Spartans allowed just -0.059 EPA/play on early downs.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Nick Nash, 138-74-971-3, 6 TDs
Rushing: Nick Nash, 68 att., 385 yds., 1 TD
Receiving: Isaiah Hamilton, 31 rec., 414 yds., 2 TDs
Tackles: Kyle Harmon, 133
Sacks: Viliami Fehoko, 7.0
Interceptions: Nehemiah Shelton, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Brent Brennan
Record at School: 20-37 (5 years)
Career Record: 20-37 (5 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Kevin McGiven
Defensive Coordinator: Derrick Odum
Location: San Jose, CA
Stadium: CEFCU Stadium (30,456)

OFFENSE San Jose State's offense took an unexpected step backwards in 2021 after helping the Spartans to the 2020 Mountain West title. Quarterback Chevan Cordeiro hopes to change that. Cordeiro started the past two seasons at Hawaii and was part of the wave of departures at the end of the Todd Graham regime. He threw for 31 touchdowns and ran for 10 more over the past two seasons with the Rainbows while completing 59 percent of his passes. Cordeiro had a strong spring game and looks like a good fit in San Jose State's multiple offense. Nick Nash returns in a backup role after seeing significant time in 2021.

The receiving corps will feature two transfers from Nevada — Elijah Cooks and Justin Lockhart — who will complement leading returner Isaiah Hamilton. This group should be stronger than last season.

Kairee Robinson and Shamar Garrett will carry the rushing load behind an offensive line that is replacing three starters. If there was an area of concern on offense coming out of spring practice, it was the line. Several players got looks across the five positions as the staff tried to figure out how to maximize its personnel.

DEFENSE Cade Hall's return for a fifth season was welcome news for defensive coordinator Derrick Odum, who saw his troops fall from 15th in the nation in points allowed in 2020 to 68th last season. Hall was the MW Defensive Player of the Year in 2020 and looked poised for another big season in 2021 before heading off to the NFL Draft. But he battled injuries last season, saw his production dip and decided he wanted one more year to boost his stock. Hall is one of eight starters back, including all three players on the defensive line.

Viliami Fehoko is another plus player at defensive end who was first-team All-Mountain West after leading the team with seven sacks. Linebacker Kyle Harmon was third in the nation in tackles per game with 11.1 and is one of three starting linebackers returning. Alii Matau, an honorable mention All-MWC performer last year, is the other.

In the secondary, two starters are back, but there is also considerable depth. The hope is this unit can improve after allowing 236.1 yards passing per game, 77th in the nation.

SPECIALISTS Sophomore Taren Schive was the kickoff specialist in 2021, and he will add field goals and extra points to his job description this fall. Walk-on Travis Benham will be the punter, although Schive is capable of punting if necessary. Garrett will likely handle the punt and kick return duties again.

FINAL ANALYSIS There's no way around it — last year's 5–7 finish for the defending MW champs was a disappointment. Injuries played a major factor, especially at quarterback, and that snowballed across the team.

Getting back to a bowl game is a realistic goal for this group if it stays healthy. There are some solid pieces on defense, and Cordeiro was off to a promising start in the spring at QB.

CADE HALL

Larry Placido/Icon Sportswire via AP Images

> "Brent Brennan and his guys are one of the best staffs in the conference. As long as he's there, they're going to be competitive and not fall back into the one- and two-win San Jose."
>
> —An opposing MW assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Jabari Bates, RB, Bellflower, CA	★★★
2	Jakob Galloway, ATH, Wilmington, CA	★★★
3	Jairus Satele, DL, Bellflower, CA	★★★
4	Uluakinofo Taliauli, OL, Mountain View, CA	★★★
5	Justin Eklund, LB, Folsom, CA	★★★
6	Tyler Voss, QB, Valencia, CA	★★★
7	Justin Stearns, LB, San Diego, CA	★★★
8	Anthony Garcia, QB, Sacramento, CA	★★★
9	Damonie Perkins, LB, Concord, CA	★★★
10	Kejuan Bullard Jr., ATH, San Pedro, CA	★★★

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (4)

WR	11	Justin Lockhart (So.)	12	Malikhi Miller (So.)
WR	**9**	**Isaiah Hamilton (Sr.)**	**13**	**Jermaine Braddock (Sr.)**
WR	4	Elijah Cooks (Sr.)	7	Charles Ross (So.)
LT	77	Scott Breslin (Sr.)	79	Fernando Carmona Jr. (So.)
LG	62	Jesse Chamberlain (Sr.)	57	Bryce Petersen (Sr.)
C	74	Anthony Pardue (Sr.)	71	Tyler Ostrom (Sr.)
RG	**70**	**Tyler Stevens (Sr.)**	74	Anthony Pardue (Sr.)
RT	**54**	**Jaime Navarro (Sr.)**	73	John Weiss (Sr.)
TE	88	Sam Olson (Jr.)	86	Skylar Loving-Black (Jr.)
QB	2	Chevan Cordeiro (Jr.)	16	Nick Nash (Sr.)
RB	32	Kairee Robinson (Sr.)	24	Shamar Garrett (Jr.)

DEFENSE (8)

Returning Starters in BOLD

DE	**42**	**Viliami Fehoko (Jr.)**	4	Noah Wright (Sr.)
NT	**90**	**Lando Grey (Sr.)**	96	Jay Kakiva (Sr.)
DE	**92**	**Cade Hall (Sr.)**	99	Marcel Sanders (So.)
OLB	9	Matthew Tago (Sr.)	2	Dion Leonard (Sr.)
ILB	**45**	**Kyle Harmon (Sr.)**	10	Bryun Parham (So.)
ILB	40	Isa'ako Togia (Sr.)	**44**	**Jordan Cobbs (Sr.)**
OLB	**8**	**Alii Matau (Sr.)**	78	Soane Toia (Jr.)
CB	**23**	**Nehemiah Shelton (Sr.)**	1	Ryan Nixon(Sr.)
CB	0	Kenyon Reed (Jr.)	21	Mikale Greer (So.)
SS	20	Tre White (Sr.)	**27**	**Andrew Jenkins (Sr.)**
FS	22	Tre Jenkins (Sr.)	19	B.J. Johnson (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	49	Taren Schive (So.)	**KR**	24	Shamar Garrett (Jr.)
P	28	Travis Benham (Sr.)	**PR**	24	Shamar Garrett (Jr.)

UNLV REBELS

National Forecast: 112 • MW West Prediction: 4 • Projected Record: 4-8, 3-5 MW

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Idaho State
Sept. 10	at California
Sept. 17	North Texas
Sept. 24	at Utah State
Oct. 1	New Mexico
Oct. 8	at San Jose State
Oct. 15	Air Force
Oct. 22	at Notre Dame
Nov. 5	at San Diego State
Nov. 12	Fresno State
Nov. 19	at Hawaii
Nov. 26	Nevada

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 2-10, 2-6 MWC

Sept. 2	Eastern Washington (ot)	L	33-35
Sept. 11	at Arizona State	L	10-41
Sept. 18	Iowa State	L	3-48
Sept. 24	at Fresno State	L	30-38
Oct. 2	at UTSA	L	17-24
Oct. 16	Utah State	L	24-28
Oct. 21	San Jose State	L	20-27
Oct. 29	at Nevada	L	20-51
Nov. 6	at New Mexico	W	31-17
Nov. 13	Hawaii	W	27-13
Nov. 19	San Diego State	L	20-28
Nov. 26	at Air Force	L	14-48

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MW	NATIONAL
Scoring	20.8 ppg	10	111
Rushing	109.8 ypg	11	116
Passing	202.5 ypg	8	93
Total	312.2 ypg	11	119

DEFENSE	PER GAME	MW	NATIONAL
Scoring	32.8 ppg	12	107
Rushing	171.9 ypg	10	93
Passing	236.5 ypg	10	78
Total	408.4 ypg	11	88

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	MW	NATIONAL
-5	-0.42	9	98

STAT CORNER

-0.128

UNLV struggled mightily on early downs, averaging -0.128 EPA/play on first and second downs, 124th in the FBS. The Rebels were successful on just 33.1 percent of early downs.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Cameron Friel, 226-141-1,608-11, 6 TDs
Rushing: Doug Brumfield, 19 att., 132 yds., 2 TDs
Receiving: Kyle Williams, 42 rec., 601 yds., 2 TDs
Tackles: Austin Ajiake, 74
Sacks: Brennon Scott, 4.0
Interceptions: Phillip Hill, Ricky Johnson, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Marcus Arroyo
Record at School: 2-16 (2 years)
Career Record: 2-16 (2 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Nick Holz
Defensive Coordinator: Keith Heyward
Location: Las Vegas, NV
Stadium: Allegiant Stadium (65,000)

OFFENSE Cameron Friel returns at quarterback after earning Mountain West Freshman of the Year honors. However, it's no guarantee that he'll be the starter. Harrison Bailey, a former five-start recruit rated the No. 2 pro-style prospect by Rivals after leading Marietta High School to the 2019 Georgia 7A title, transferred in from Tennessee and was impressive during spring drills.

The big question is who will replace two-time first-team All-MW running back Charles Williams, the school's all-time leading rusher who ran for 1,261 yards on 254 carries (5.0 avg.) and 15 TDs last season. Backups Chad Magyar and Courtney Reese both return, but head coach Marcus Arroyo was busy scouring the transfer portal in the spring for other possible replacements.

Leading receiver Steve Jenkins entered the transfer portal midway through spring drills, but the Rebels have solid depth there. Junior Kyle Williams, who was a Freshman All-American and Mountain West Freshman of the Year in 2020, and Michigan State transfer Ricky White, a former prep teammate of Bailey's who set a Spartan freshman single-game receiving record with 196 yards on eight catches (24.5 avg.) and a touchdown in a 27–24 upset of Michigan in 2020, lead the way.

Junior center Leif Fautanu returns to anchor a line that yielded 41 sacks and will be counting on a pair of transfers from FCS Charleston Southern, tackle Daviyon McDaniel and guard Preston Nichols, to start.

DEFENSE An already leaky defense, which yielded a league-worst 32.8 points per game, lost its lone returning all-conference player when linebacker Jacoby Windmon transferred to Michigan State.

The defensive line returns four seniors, including end Adam Plant Jr., who started his career at TCU and had 46 tackles and 3.5 sacks.

Senior Austin Ajiake, the team's defensive MVP and an honorable mention all-conference pick, returns to anchor the linebacker corps after averaging 9.25 tackles per game.

The secondary, led by safeties Bryce Jackson and Phillip Hill, is the strength of the defense. Senior cornerback Jerrae Williams starred in the team's spring scrimmage.

SPECIALISTS Daniel Gutierrez, an honorable mention all-conference selection, returns to handle placekicking duties. Gutierrez connected on 16-of-18 field goals, including a career-best 53-yarder, and was perfect on all 25 of his PATs. Walk-on Ryan O'Hara and sophomore Charlton Butt are competing for the punting position after the Rebels ranked last in the MW with an average of 36.0 yards.

FINAL ANALYSIS The Rebels showed improvement toward the end of a 2–10 campaign in 2021, winning two of their final four games and also playing conference champ San Diego State on even terms. But with a new athletic director on board in Erick Harper and just a 2–16 record to show for his first two years on the job, Arroyo needs to flirt with a .500 record to make it back for a fourth season.

KYLE WILLIAMS

AP Photo/Darren Abate

> "They have lots of problems for sure, but if you squint, there was progress down the stretch last season. Coaches can look at some of those closer games and see buy-in."
>
> —An opposing MW assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Randy Masters, WR, Houston, TX	★★★
2	Jayden Maiava, QB, Henderson, NV	★★★
3	Tanner Salisbury, LB, Danville, CA	★★★
4	Anthony Costanzo, ATH, Monument, CO	★★★
5	Fred Thompkins, LB, Paso Robles, CA*	★★★
6	Isaiah Sayles, DE, San Antonio, TX*	★★★
7	Jeff Weimer, WR, Salinas, CA*	★★★
8	Noah McKinney, OT, Henderson, NV	★★★
9	Darius Johnson, DL, Spokane, WA*	★★★
10	Fisher Camac, LB, Gilbert, AZ	★★

*junior college transfer

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

WR	**1**	**Kyle Williams (Jr.)**	0	Senika McKie (Jr.)
WR	16	Jeffrey Weimer (Sr.)	**86**	**Marcus Phillips Jr. (Jr.)**
WR	11	Ricky White (So.)	10	Deamikkio Nathan II (Fr.)
LT	**71**	**Daviyon McDaniel (Sr.)**	72	Brandon Logan (Jr.)
LG	55	Preston Nichols (Sr.)	73	Alani Makihele (So.)
C	**79**	**Leif Fautanu (Jr.)**	54	Anthony Rosas (Fr.)
RG	**60**	**Amani Trigg-Wright (Sr.)**	57	Cobe Bryant (Sr.)
RT	**70**	**Tiger Shanks (So.)**	77	Anthony Berry (Jr.)
TE	19	Kaleo Ballungay (So.)	88	Shelton Zeon III (Sr.)
QB	5	Harrison Bailey (So.)	**7**	**Cameron Friel (So.)**
RB	36	Chad Magyar (Sr.)	26	Courtney Reese (Jr.)

DEFENSE (7)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	7	Adam Plant Jr. (Sr.)	3	Isaiah Sayles (Sr.)
DT	**62**	**Eliel Ehimare (Sr.)**	96	Waisale Muavesi (Fr.)
NT	6	Naki Fahina (Sr.)	8	Darius Johnson (Sr.)
DT	55	Tavis Malakius (Sr.)	97	Nick Dimitris (Fr.)
OLB	**22**	**Brennon Scott (So.)**	13	Jordan Eubanks (Fr.)
MLB	**27**	**Austin Ajiake (Sr.)**	40	Dondi Fuller (Sr.)
OLB	44	Kyle Beaudry (Sr.)	10	Fred Thompkins (Sr.)
CB	**2**	**Nohl Williams (Jr.)**	0	Ricky Johnson (Jr.)
CB	23	Jerrae Williams (Sr.)	**25**	**Cameron Oliver (So.)**
S	**5**	**Phillip Hill (Sr.)**	4	Trenton Holloway (Sr.)
S	**24**	**Bryce Jackson (Sr.)**	21	Johnathan Baldwin (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	32	Daniel Gutierrez (Sr.)	KR	23	Jerrae Williams (Sr.)
P	48	Ryan O'Hara (Jr.)	PR	1	Kyle Williams (Jr.)

PAC-12 PREVIEW

NORTH DIVISION

PREDICTED ORDER OF FINISH

1	OREGON **DUCKS**	9-4, 7-2
2	OREGON STATE **BEAVERS**	7-5, 5-4
3	WASHINGTON **HUSKIES**	7-5, 5-4
4	WASHINGTON STATE **COUGARS**	6-6, 4-5
5	CALIFORNIA **GOLDEN BEARS**	6-6, 4-5
6	STANFORD **CARDINAL**	4-8, 3-6

SOUTH DIVISION

PREDICTED ORDER OF FINISH

1	UTAH **UTES**	11-2, 7-2
2	USC **TROJANS**	9-3, 6-3
3	UCLA **BRUINS**	8-4, 5-4
4	ARIZONA **WILDCATS**	4-8, 3-6
5	ARIZONA STATE **SUN DEVILS**	5-7, 3-6
6	COLORADO **BUFFALOES**	3-9, 2-7

Games to Watch

Oregon vs. Georgia (Atlanta), Sept. 3
Utah at Florida, Sept. 3
USC at Utah, Oct. 15
UCLA at Oregon, Oct. 22
Washington at Oregon, Nov. 12
Utah at Oregon, Nov. 19
USC at UCLA, Nov. 19
Stanford at California, Nov. 19
Oregon at Oregon State, Nov. 25
Arizona State at Arizona, Nov. 25
Notre Dame at USC, Nov. 26
Washington at Washington State, Nov. 26

TAVION THOMAS

Pac-12 Championship:
Utah over Oregon

Recruiting by School

1. Stanford
2. Arizona
3. Oregon
4. Utah
5. Colorado
6. Oregon State
7. UCLA
8. California
9. Washington State
10. USC
11. Washington
12. Arizona State

Nick Grace/University of Utah

ALL-PAC-12 TEAM

FIRST-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	**Caleb Williams**	So.	USC
RB	**Zach Charbonnet**	Jr.	UCLA
RB	**Tavion Thomas**	Jr.	Utah
AP	**Travis Dye**	Sr.	USC
WR	**Mario Williams**	So.	USC
WR	**Jacob Cowing**	So.	Arizona
TE	**Brant Kuithe**	Sr.	Utah
C	**Alex Forsyth**	Sr.	Oregon
OL	**T.J. Bass**	Sr.	Oregon
OL	**Jaxson Kirkland**	Sr.	Washington
OL	**Braeden Daniels**	Jr.	Utah
OL	**Andrew Vorhees**	Sr.	USC

FIRST-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	**Tuli Tuipulotu**	Jr.	USC
DL	**Brandon Dorlus**	Jr.	Oregon
DL	**Ron Stone Jr.**	Jr.	Washington State
DL	**Jermayne Lole**	Sr.	Arizona State
LB	**Zion Tupuola-Fetui**	Jr.	Washington
LB	**Noah Sewell**	So.	Oregon
LB	**Jackson Sirmon**	Sr.	California
LB	**Omar Speights**	Jr.	Oregon State
CB	**Clark Phillips III**	So.	Utah
CB	**Kyu Blu Kelly**	Sr.	Stanford
S	**Cole Bishop**	So.	Utah
S	**Daniel Scott**	Sr.	California

FIRST-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	**Dean Janikowski**	So.	Washington State
KR	**Kazmeir Allen**	Jr.	UCLA
P	**Kyle Ostendorp**	So.	Arizona
PR	**D.J. Taylor**	So.	Arizona State

SECOND-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	**Cameron Rising**	Jr.	Utah
RB	**Xazavian Valladay**	Sr.	Arizona State
RB	**Byron Cardwell**	So.	Oregon
WR	**Jake Bobo**	Sr.	UCLA
WR	**De'Zhaun Stribling**	So.	Washington State
WR	**Jalen McMillan**	So.	Washington
TE	**Benjamin Yurosek**	Jr.	Stanford
C	**Brett Neilon**	Sr.	USC
OL	**Joshua Gray**	So.	Oregon State
OL	**Jake Levengood**	Jr.	Oregon State
OL	**LaDarius Henderson**	Sr.	Arizona State
OL	**Brandon Kipper**	Sr.	Oregon State

SECOND-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	**Tuli Letuligasenoa**	Jr.	Washington
DL	**Van Fillinger**	So.	Utah
DL	**Brennan Jackson**	Jr.	Washington State
DL	**Kyon Barrs**	So.	Arizona
LB	**Daiyan Henley**	Sr.	Washington State
LB	**Darius Muasau**	Jr.	UCLA
LB	**Merlin Robertson**	Sr.	Arizona State
LB	**Carson Bruener**	So.	Washington
CB	**Rejzohn Wright**	Sr.	Oregon State
CB	**Armani Marsh**	Sr.	Washington State
S	**Jaydon Grant**	Sr.	Oregon State
S	**Isaiah Lewis**	Sr.	Colorado

SECOND-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	**Camden Lewis**	Jr.	Oregon
KR	**D.J. Taylor**	So.	Arizona State
P	**Luke Loecher**	Sr.	Oregon State
PR	**Casey Filkins**	Jr.	Stanford

THIRD-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	**D. Thompson-Robinson**	Sr.	UCLA
RB	**Damien Martinez**	Fr.	Oregon State
RB	**Damien Moore**	Jr.	California
WR	**Renard Bell**	Sr.	Washington State
WR	**Michael Wilson**	Sr.	Stanford
WR	**Gary Bryant Jr.**	Jr.	USC
TE	**Dalton Kincaid**	Sr.	Utah
C	**Matthew Cindric**	Sr.	California
OL	**Branson Bragg**	Sr.	Stanford
OL	**Ben Scott**	Jr.	Arizona State
OL	**Ben Coleman**	Jr.	California
OL	**Henry Bainivalu**	Sr.	Washington

THIRD-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	**Jalen Sami**	Jr.	Colorado
DL	**Popo Aumavae**	Sr.	Oregon
DL	**Junior Tafuna**	So.	Utah
DL	**Nick Figueroa**	Sr.	USC
LB	**Karene Reid**	Sr.	Utah
LB	**Justin Flowe**	Fr.	Oregon
LB	**Quinn Perry**	Sr.	Colorado
LB	**Kyle Soelle**	Sr.	Arizona State
CB	**C. Roland-Wallace**	So.	Arizona
CB	**Mekhi Blackmon**	Sr.	USC
S	**Calen Bullock**	So.	USC
S	**Kendall Williamson**	Sr.	Stanford

THIRD-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	**Cole Becker**	So.	Colorado
KR	**Giles Jackson**	Jr.	Washington
P	**Nick Haberer**	So.	Washington State
PR	**Giles Jackson**	Jr.	Washington

2022 BOWL PROJECTIONS

Alamo Bowl
Oregon vs. Oklahoma State
First Responder Bowl
California vs. TCU
Holiday Bowl
UCLA vs. Wake Forest
LA Bowl
Washington State vs. Boise State
Las Vegas Bowl
Washington vs. LSU
Sun Bowl
Oregon State vs. Boston College
Cotton Bowl
USC vs. Cincinnati
Rose Bowl
Utah vs. Michigan

2021 STANDINGS

North	Pac-12	Overall
Oregon	7-2	10-4
Washington State	6-3	7-6
Oregon State	5-4	7-6
California	4-5	5-7
Washington	3-6	4-8
Stanford	2-7	3-9
South	**Pac-12**	**Overall**
Utah	8-1	10-4
Arizona State	6-3	8-5
UCLA	6-3	8-4
USC	3-6	4-8
Colorado	3-6	4-8
Arizona	1-8	1-11

2021 BOWL RESULTS

LA Bowl
Utah State 24, Oregon State 13
Alamo Bowl
Oklahoma 47, Oregon 32
Las Vegas Bowl
Wisconsin 20, Arizona State 13
Sun Bowl
Central Michigan 24, Washington State 21
Rose Bowl
Ohio State 48, Utah 45
Holiday Bowl
UCLA vs. NC State (canceled)

CALIFORNIA GOLDEN BEARS

National Forecast: 62 • Pac-12 North Prediction: 5 • Projected Record: 6-6, 4-5 Pac-12

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Justin Wilcox
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 26-28 (5 years)
CAREER RECORD: 26-28 (5 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Bill Musgrave
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Peter Sirmon
LOCATION: Berkeley, CA
STADIUM: Memorial Stadium (62,467)

KEY GOLDEN BEARS

BRETT JOHNSON, DE The team's best defensive lineman — and perhaps its best player — in 2020, Johnson returns after missing all of last season following a serious hip injury in a car accident.

DANIEL SCOTT, S The playmaking safety was named first-team All-Pac-12 by Pro Football Focus after starting all 12 games and posting career-best totals of 82 tackles and three interceptions.

MATTHEW CINDRIC, C Versatile offensive lineman, named honorable mention All-Pac-12 in 2021, has played center and guard while starting 27 games the past three seasons.

KEY LOSSES

CHASE GARBERS, QB A starter for most of the past four seasons, Garbers passed for 6,582 yards and 50 touchdowns and ran for 1,174 yards and 11 TDs while directing the Bears to a 19–11 record in games where he played more than one half.

CAMERON GOODE, OLB The Bears' big-play man on defense, Goode totaled 36 tackles for a loss in his career and had pick-6s against Ole Miss and North Carolina.

ELIJAH HICKS, S Began college at cornerback then became an All-Pac-12 safety in 2021, capping a career in which he had 211 tackles and five interceptions in 46 starts.

RISING STAR

Redshirt freshman wideout **J.MICHAEL STURDIVANT** barely played last season while dealing with injuries and an established corps of senior receivers ahead of him on the Bears' depth chart. There is an opportunity for Sturdivant this season, and Cal expects the one-time Texas four-star prospect to blossom.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Jaydn Ott, RB, Norco, CA	★★★★
2	Trent Ramsey, OT, Tampa, FL	★★★
3	Nate Burrell, DL, Bellflower, CA	★★★
4	Ashton Hayes, RB, Reno, NV	★★★
5	Curlee Thomas IV, Edge, Ft. Worth, TX	★★★
6	Jackson Brown, OT, Danville, CA	★★★
7	Sioape Vatikani, OL, Reno, NV	★★★
8	Jaiven Plummer, WR, Alexandria, VA	★★★
9	Cam Sidney, CB, Santa Ana, CA	★★★
10	Nunie Tuitele, Edge, Aurora, CO	★★★
11	Nick Morrow, OT, Flagstaff, AZ	★★★
12	Jeremiah Earby, CB, Menlo Park, CA	★★★
13	Mason Starling, WR, Seattle, WA*	★★★
14	Fernando Mendoza, QB, Miami, FL	★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite *junior college transfer

Only eight of the 22 players who started Cal's final game a year ago are back from a team that was 5–7 overall and, at 4–5 in Pac-12 play, fell short of a winning conference record for the 12th consecutive season.

But Bears head coach Justin Wilcox, beginning his sixth season in Berkeley, sees opportunity. He points out that the Bears lost five games by a touchdown or less, suggesting the arc of their season could have been dramatically different.

"We have very high expectations for ourselves. You look at last season and what we did well and where we felt short, we've got to win in the margins," he says. "Can we find ways coaching and playing as a team to make up those margins?"

They'll pursue that goal with significantly less starting experience than they've had in several years, but Wilcox likes his team's talent level. "Physically, there are guys who can do the jobs," he says. "They just haven't done it yet."

OFFENSE Every skill position player who started in the season-ending win over USC is gone, including quarterback Chase Garbers. His likely replacement is Purdue transfer Jack Plummer, who arrived as a senior with two years of eligibility and got first-team reps in spring ball.

"He's accurate down the field (with) the intermediate throws, the deep throws and he's got a real good understanding of football," Wilcox says of the former part-time starter with the Boilermakers. The coaching staff also likes redshirt freshman Kai Millner, but he has never thrown a pass in a college game.

Damien Moore had some fumbling issues last season but has recorded a 100-yard rushing game in each of the last two seasons as a part-time starter.

The wideout position is anchored by Jeremiah Hunter, who averaged 18.5 yards per catch. Otherwise, the staff is optimistic about redshirt freshmen J.Michael Sturdivant and Mavin Anderson. "We do feel like the young wideouts could be a real strength for us. They've got to come of age," Wilcox says.

Likewise, sophomore tight ends Keleki Latu and Jermaine Terry II are young but have good potential. They will often be on the field at the same time.

The offensive line is thinner after two offseason losses, with guard McKade Mettauer transferring to Oklahoma and tackle Will Craig retiring.

DEFENSE The Bears welcome back defensive lineman Brett Johnson, who missed the entire 2021 season after suffering a serious hip injury in a car accident. Johnson, who can play anywhere along the D-line but likely will start at end, may be the team's best player. He was kept to a "pitch count" during spring ball, but he says, "For all intents and purposes, I'm ready to go."

Cal's deepest position is inside linebacker, featuring Washington transfer Jackson Sirmon, whose 91 tackles last season are second among returning players in the Pac-12. "He's a talented player and has a significant amount of experience, so we're looking for him to help

DAMIEN MOORE

Thearon W. Henderson/Getty Images

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	UC Davis
Sept. 10	UNLV
Sept. 17	at Notre Dame
Sept. 24	Arizona
Oct. 1	at Washington State
Oct. 15	at Colorado
Oct. 22	Washington
Oct. 29	Oregon
Nov. 5	at USC
Nov. 12	at Oregon State
Nov. 19	Stanford
Nov. 25	UCLA

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 5-7, 4-5 PAC-12

Sept. 4	Nevada	L	17-22
Sept. 11	at TCU	L	32-34
Sept. 18	Sacramento State	W	42-30
Sept. 25	at Washington (ot)	L	24-31
Oct. 2	Washington State	L	6-21
Oct. 15	at Oregon	L	17-24
Oct. 23	Colorado	W	26-3
Oct. 30	Oregon State	W	39-25
Nov. 6	at Arizona	L	3-10
Nov. 20	at Stanford	W	41-11
Nov. 27	at UCLA	L	14-42
Dec. 4	USC	W	24-14

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	PAC-12	NATIONAL
Scoring	23.8 ppg	8	96
Rushing	164.2 ypg	6	61
Passing	221.8 ypg	6	74
Total	386.0 ypg	6	75
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**PAC-12**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	22.2 ppg	2	32
Rushing	137.2 ypg	4	41
Passing	229.5 ypg	7	67
Total	366.7 ypg	4	49
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**PAC-12**	**NATIONAL**
+10	+0.83	2	11

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		Rank
Offense	26.6	114
Defense	28.8	63
Margin	-2.2	94

Efficiency[2]		Rank
Offense	44.8%	51
Defense	43.0%	76
Margin	+1.8%	58

Explosiveness[3]		Rank
Offense	6.0	59
Defense	5.5	45
Margin	+0.5	51

Finishing Drives[4]		Rank
Offense	3.8	102
Defense	3.7	34
Margin	+0.1	76

Adjusted TO Margin[5]		Rank
Projected	4.9	8
Actual	10	12
Margin	+5.1	25

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

0.141

Cal rushed 3.4 percent less often than the average team in 2021 but averaged 0.141 EPA/rush to rank 17th nationally in rushing efficiency.

40.3%

Cal struggled with poor starting field position throughout the 2021 season. The Bears ranked 114th in starting field position and began 40.3 percent of all their drives inside their own 25.

-0.084

Cal's passing offense ranked 74th in yards per game but only 107th in the nation in efficiency, averaging -0.084 EPA/pass and a 35.4 percent passing success rate.

the team," says defensive coordinator Peter Sirmon, who doubles as Jackson's dad.

Fellow inside linebackers Femi Oladejo, Nate Rutchena, Muelu Iosefa and Trey Paster combined for nearly 150 tackles at the position a year ago.

The secondary this season will be anchored by safety Daniel Scott, who led the Bears with 82 tackles and had three interceptions last season. Cornerback Lu-Magia Hearns III was good enough to land a starting job midway through his freshman season.

SPECIALISTS One of the Bears' few areas of experience is in the kicking game, where Dario Longhetto returns after converting all 31 PAT tries and making 11-of-14 field goals, and Jamieson Sheahan averaged 43.1 yards per punt a year ago.

There is less certainty in the return game, where the Bears will move forward without Nikko Remigio, who averaged 29.1 yards on kick returns.

FINAL ANALYSIS The Bears had a combined record of just 6–10 over the last two seasons after going 15–11 the two previous seasons, but Wilcox has done enough to impress Cal's administration. His alma mater Oregon came calling in the offseason, and Wilcox delivered a surprise response by turning down their head-coaching job offer.

Turns out he and the school already were working on a contract extension that could keep him in Berkeley through the 2027 season and will pay him an average of $4.75 million prior to incentive bonuses. His new deal also came with a nearly 20 percent increase for the assistant coaches' salary pool.

Wilcox's commitment to Cal is born out of his belief the program is on the cusp of a breakthrough. "If we continue along this path," he says, "we can do some great things here, and things that haven't been done before."

One thing the Bears haven't done is beat Notre Dame. They will take an 0–4 all-time record against the Fighting Irish to South Bend on Sept. 17, the first clash between the two programs in 55 seasons. Even with that significant obstacle, it's not difficult to envision Cal starting 5–1.

The Bears' Pac-12 schedule is backloaded with games against Washington, Oregon and USC on consecutive weekends, before home dates vs. Stanford and UCLA to close the regular season.

The Bears are undaunted. Says linebacker Oladejo, "We expect to be a Pac-12 championship team."

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (3)

WR	10	Jeremiah Hunter (Jr.)	14	Monroe Young (Sr.)
WR	6	J.Michael Sturdivant (Fr.)	22	Justin Richard Baker (Jr.)
WR	17	Mavin Anderson (Fr.)	18	Mason Starling (Jr.)
LT	**62**	**Ben Coleman (Jr.)**	66	Colin Hamilton (So.)
LG	76	Bastian Swinney (Fr.)		Sioape Vatikani (Fr.)
C	**73**	**Matthew Cindric (Sr.)**	65	Dylan Jemtegaard (Fr.)
RG	60	Brian Driscoll (Jr.)	77	Everett Johnson (Jr.)
RT	63	Brayden Rohme (Jr.)	79	Ender Aguilar (So.)
TE	40	Keleki Latu (So.)	87	Jermaine Terry II (So.)
QB	13	Jack Plummer (Sr.)	2	Kai Millner (Fr.)
RB	**28**	**Damien Moore (Jr.)**	25	DeCarlos Brooks (Jr.)

DEFENSE (4)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	90	Brett Johnson (Jr.)	96	Derek Wilkins (Fr.)
NG	91	Ricky Correia (Jr.)	75	Jaedon Roberts (Jr.)
DE	99	Ethan Saunders (Jr.)	44	Xavier Carlton (Jr.)
OLB	52	Braxten Croteau (Sr.)	95	Akili Calhoun (Fr.)
ILB	8	Jackson Sirmon (Sr.)	**55**	**Muelu Iosefa (Jr.)**
ILB	43	Femi Oladejo (So.)	42	Nate Rutchena (So.)
OLB	48	Orin Patu (Jr.)	33	Myles Jernigan (Jr.)
CB	**21**	**Collin Gamble (Jr.)**	41	Isaiah Young (Jr.)
CB	**15**	**Lu-Magia Hearns III (So.)**	28	Kaleb Higgins (Fr.)
S	26	Craig Woodson (Jr.)	13	Miles Williams (Jr.)
S	**32**	**Daniel Scott (Sr.)**	5	Raymond Woodie III (Sr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	30	Dario Longhetto (Sr.)	**KR**	17	Mavin Anderson (Fr.)
P	37	Jamieson Sheahan (Sr.)	**PR**	15	Lu-Magia Hearns III (So.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Chase Garbers	348	223	2,533	16	8
Ryan Glover	**29**	**11**	**94**	**0**	**0**
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Christopher Brooks	116	607	5.2	4	
Damien Moore	**100**	**518**	**5.2**	**6**	
Chase Garbers	104	456	4.4	4	
Marcel Dancy	26	161	6.2	2	
Chris Street	**21**	**107**	**5.1**	**1**	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Kekoa Crawford	40	513	12.8	0	
Nikko Remigio	38	238	6.3	2	
Trevon Clark	33	658	19.9	4	
Jake Tonges	22	278	12.6	2	
Jeremiah Hunter	**21**	**388**	**18.5**	**1**	

KICKING: **Dario Longhetto, 11-14 FGs, 64 pts.**
TACKLES: **Daniel Scott, 82;** Elijah Hicks, 72
SACKS: Cameron Goode, 7.5
INTERCEPTIONS: 3 players tied with 3

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE GOLDEN BEARS

Opposing Coaches Size Up California

There's no reason this program should be as lopsided as they've been under the last two head coaches. Sonny [Dykes] was all offense; now they're literally all defense. Justin [Wilcox] is a great guy and has a great rep, but the OC hire didn't make any sense at the time, and it's come back to bite them. Plenty of really smart coaches have failed at head jobs because they couldn't get the other side of the ball right. … They've been really good early on and then they get more and more inconsistent as the year goes on. They're really really sound and solid on defense. That part is working great. They respond to whatever you want to throw at them, they can maintain the ability to adjust and dress things up without losing that edge, that ability to get after it. … Offensively, it's vanilla. I think the intention there was to run a risk-mitigation offense to keep the defense fresh, but it hasn't kept up with the times. I don't think it's personnel so much as culture and scheme. They need new ideas. … When you talk about the issues with the league, this is a program a lot of coaches point to. Wilcox was in on the Oregon job, and not just because he's an alum. He's a really good coach. So what's the problem here? The administration and the city did them no favors with the strict pandemic policy, that's for sure. But you need the average-level program like this to be better than what they've been."

OREGON DUCKS

National Forecast: 10 • Pac-12 North Prediction: 1 • Projected Record: 9-4, 7-2 Pac-12

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Dan Lanning
RECORD AT SCHOOL: First Season
CAREER RECORD: First Season
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Kenny Dillingham
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tosh Lupoi
LOCATION: Eugene, OR
STADIUM: Autzen Stadium (54,000)

KEY DUCKS

NOAH SEWELL, LB The younger brother of former Outland Trophy winner Penei Sewell had 114 tackles in 2021, 35 more than anyone else on Oregon's defense.

BRANDON DORLUS, DE Complemented Kayvon Thibodeaux as a pass-rush threat last year and will be expected to provide leadership up front in 2022.

ALEX FORSYTH, C The in-state product missed time with a back problem last season, but when healthy, Forsyth was the brains of the offensive line.

KEY LOSSES

TRAVIS DYE, RB Dye not only led the team in rushing with 1,271 yards, but he was also the heart and soul of the locker room before transferring to USC.

KAYVON THIBODEAUX, DE The No. 5 overall NFL Draft pick fought through injuries to lead the Ducks with 9.5 tackles for a loss and seven sacks as one of the most disruptive edge players in the country.

VERONE MCKINLEY III, S He was known as "The General" for the way he directed the Ducks' defense from his deep safety spot. McKinley was also a ball hawk who snared six interceptions last season and 11 for his decorated career in Eugene.

RISING STAR

He played in only one game last season, but linebacker **JUSTIN FLOWE** made sure it was memorable, recording 13 tackles and forcing a fumble in a fourth-quarter comeback to beat Fresno State in the season opener. The former five-star recruit will look to put together his first full season in 2022.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Josh Conerly Jr., OT, Seattle, WA	★★★★★
2	Devon Jackson, LB, Omaha, NE	★★★★
3	Jalil Tucker, CB, San Diego, CA	★★★★
4	Kyler Kasper, WR, Gilbert, AZ	★★★★
5	Jahlil Florence, CB, San Diego, CA	★★★★
6	Dave Iuli, OL, Puyallup, WA	★★★★
7	Jordan James, RB, Murfreesboro, TN	★★★★
8	Trejon Williams, S, Portland, OR	★★★★
9	Harrison Taggart, LB, Draper, UT	★★★★
10	Ben Roberts, DL, Salt Lake City, UT	★★★
11	Khamari Terrell, CB, Killeen, TX	★★★
12	Justius Lowe, ATH, Lake Oswego, OR	★★★
13	Emar'rion Winston, Edge, Portland, OR	★★★
14	Michael Wooten, OT, Chatsworth, CA	★★★
15	Anthony Jones, ATH, Henderson, NV	★★★
16	Kawika Rogers, OT, Kapaa, HI	★★★
17	Sir Mells, DL, Henderson, NV	★★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite

As Dan Lanning walked off the field following Georgia's national championship victory over Alabama, his job title quickly changed from defensive coordinator of the Bulldogs to head coach at Oregon.

Lanning was walking up the tunnel at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis while talking on FaceTime with a recruiting target for the Ducks. Named the next Oregon head coach a month earlier, Lanning had been essentially juggling two jobs leading up to the College Football Playoff final.

"A lot of the players that I got to visit with here in Oregon were appreciative of the commitment that I was able to make to the guys that we had there (at Georgia)," Lanning says. "It meant so much to be able to finish that season in a certain way."

The recruit Lanning was talking with after the Bulldogs' victory over Alabama? That was four-star cornerback Jahlil Florence, who ended up signing with the Ducks. It was yet another victory for Oregon's new head coach.

OFFENSE After a year of uneven play at quarterback from the now-departed Anthony Brown, the Ducks are hoping for more consistent, high-level production out of the position in 2022. Oregon is returning two promising young players, including former five-star recruit Ty Thompson, but that didn't stop the Ducks from adding Auburn transfer Bo Nix, who played for the Tigers as a freshman under Oregon's new offensive coordinator, Kenny Dillingham.

Lanning was very deliberate about not confirming any sort of depth chart or even a practice order among Nix, Thompson or redshirt freshman Jay Butterfield during the spring.

"Competition breeds excellence," Lanning says. "Ultimately we're going to have competition at every position across the board, quarterback included."

The backfield will have another new face after the departures of four-year contributors CJ Verdell and Travis Dye. Verdell declared for the NFL Draft, and Dye transferred to USC, leaving Byron Cardwell and Sean Dollars to pick up the carries, along with WKU transfer Noah Whittington. They're all versatile, quick backs, but each will have something to prove in the absence of Verdell and Dye.

The good news is that the offensive line returns almost entirely intact. Center Alex Forsyth will try to play a full season after back problems limited him in 2021, and the Ducks have a couple of potential pro prospects in T.J. Bass and Malaesala Aumavae-Laulu. The receiver group is young but talented, led by lanky wideout Troy Franklin and explosive slot Kris Hutson, and Terrance Ferguson leads a deep tight end group that could compel Dillingham to get two or even three on the field together at times.

DEFENSE The Ducks will miss explosive edge rusher Kayvon Thibodeaux, but overall, the Ducks' front seven will still be a strength. Linemen Brandon Dorlus, Popo

NOAH SEWELL

Joe Robbins

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	vs. Georgia #
Sept. 10	Eastern Washington
Sept. 17	BYU
Sept. 24	at Washington State
Oct. 1	Stanford
Oct. 8	at Arizona
Oct. 22	UCLA
Oct. 29	at California
Nov. 5	at Colorado
Nov. 12	Washington
Nov. 19	Utah
Nov. 25	at Oregon State

#Atlanta

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 10-4, 7-2 PAC-12

Sept. 4	Fresno State	W	31-24
Sept. 11	at Ohio State	W	35-28
Sept. 18	Stony Brook	W	48-7
Sept. 25	Arizona	W	41-19
Oct. 2	at Stanford (ot)	L	24-31
Oct. 15	California	W	24-17
Oct. 23	at UCLA	W	34-31
Oct. 30	Colorado	W	52-29
Nov. 6	at Washington	W	26-16
Nov. 13	Washington State	W	38-24
Nov. 20	at Utah	L	7-38
Nov. 27	Oregon State	W	38-29
Dec. 3	vs. Utah #	L	10-38
Dec. 29	vs. Oklahoma %	L	32-47

#Las Vegas %Valero Alamo Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	PAC-12	NATIONAL
Scoring	31.4 ppg	3	42
Rushing	202.4 ypg	4	24
Passing	221.3 ypg	7	76
Total	423.6 ypg	5	50

DEFENSE	PER GAME	PAC-12	NATIONAL
Scoring	27.0 ppg	9	75
Rushing	144.1 ypg	6	53
Passing	241.4 ypg	8	88
Total	385.6 ypg	8	72

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	PAC-12	NATIONAL
+8	+0.57	4	25

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	28.5	79
Defense	29.7	83
Margin	-1.2	85
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	49.8%	10
Defense	44.5%	93
Margin	+5.3%	34
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	6.4	37
Defense	5.5	53
Margin	+0.9	39
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.3	52
Defense	4.5	104
Margin	-0.2	92
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	1.1	56
Actual	9	14
Margin	+7.9	8

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

0.191

Oregon ranked sixth in the nation in offensive explosiveness (0.191 EPA/rush), a driving force behind the Ducks' 52.1 percent success rate on third down (third nationally).

42.9%

Oregon's defense allowed a 42.9 percent success rate, ranking 97th in college football. Opponents averaged 6.88 yards per dropback and 6.02 yards per rush against the Ducks.

7.36

Oregon was a highly penalized team in 2021. The Ducks averaged 7.36 penalty flags per game, ranking 112th nationally, for an average of 64.6 yards per game (111th).

Aumavae and Keyon Ware-Hudson all sat out the spring to let injuries heal, giving their backups valuable seasoning in April. Noah Sewell has a chance to be one of the best linebackers in the country, and Justin Flowe is another former five-star recruit at inside linebacker who could develop into an elite player this fall. Bradyn Swinson, DJ Johnson and Mase Funa are all explosive edge players.

The secondary needed to reload after several departures, including the unit's leader Verone McKinley III, and the Ducks scored big in the transfer portal by signing Christian Gonzalez from Colorado. Dontae Manning could be the other starter at corner if he recovers from a minor knee injury in the spring, but don't overlook that prospect Lanning was recruiting while walking off the field in Indianapolis — Florence could challenge for early playing time.

Bennett Williams was one of the best playmaking safeties in the country last September. His season-ending injury hurt the 2021 Oregon defense, but it benefited the 2022 version because a healthy Williams might have left for this year's draft. With Jamal Hill also back at the nickel spot, Williams could slide back to one of the deep safety positions, where the Ducks also have a couple of long, rangy ball hawks in Bryan Addison and Trikweze Bridges.

SPECIALISTS Camden Lewis is a seasoned placekicker, but the punting position was in flux in the spring with veteran Tom Snee away from the team. His decision whether to rejoin the program for the 2022 season will be a situation to watch late in the summer. Hutson is back to return kicks after averaging 22.4 yards per return, and Seven McGee is on hand for punt return duties.

FINAL ANALYSIS Back when Chip Kelly was head coach, Oregon became known for fast-paced offense that piled up points. The Ducks grew more conservative under Mario Cristobal, and now the pendulum might swing completely the other way, with some question marks at key positions on offense but what looks like a stacked unit on defense.

"People might say, 'You can't play defense like you used to play,' and ultimately for me I'm going to say, 'Why not?'" Lanning says. "Why can we not adapt? Why can't we re-create? And if you have a group of men that believe in that, then great things can be accomplished."

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

WR	11	Troy Franklin (So.)	6	Isaah Crocker (Jr.)
WR	**1**	**Kris Hutson (So.)**	7	Seven McGee (So.)
WR	2	Dont'e Thornton (So.)	23	Chase Cota (Sr.)
LT	**74**	**Steven Jones (Jr.)**	70	Dawson Jaramillo (Jr.)
LG	**56**	**T.J. Bass (Sr.)**	75	Faaope Laloulu (So.)
C	**78**	**Alex Forsyth (Sr.)**	58	Jackson Powers-Johnson (So.)
RG	**53**	**Ryan Walk (Sr.)**	55	Marcus Harper II (So.)
RT	**71**	**M. Aumavae-Laulu (Sr.)**	72	Bram Walden (Fr.)
TE	**3**	**Terrance Ferguson (So.)**	4	Spencer Webb (Jr.)
QB	10	Bo Nix (Jr.)	13	Ty Thompson (Fr.)
RB	5	Sean Dollars (So.)	21	Byron Cardwell (So.)

DEFENSE (7)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	**3**	**Brandon Dorlus (Jr.)**	44	Bradyn Swinson (So.)
DT	**50**	**Popo Aumavae (Sr.)**	55	Sam Taimani (Jr.)
DT	95	Keyon Ware-Hudson (So.)	94	Sua'ava Poti (So.)
ILB	**1**	**Noah Sewell (So.)**	42	Jackson LaDuke (Fr.)
ILB	10	Justin Flowe (Fr.)	**33**	**Jeffrey Bassa (So.)**
OLB	2	DJ Johnson (Sr.)	**18**	**Mase Funa (Jr.)**
CB	0	Christian Gonzalez (So.)	28	Avante Dickerson (So.)
CB	8	Dontae Manning (So.)		Jahlil Florence (Fr.)
NB	**19**	**Jamal Hill (Jr.)**	15	Bennett Williams (Sr.)
S	13	Bryan Addison (Jr.)	11	Trikweze Bridges (So.)
S	**7**	**Steve Stephens IV (Jr.)**	4	Daymon David (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	49	Camden Lewis (Jr.)	KR	1	Kris Hutson (So.)
P	38	Tom Snee (Jr.)	PR	7	Seven McGee (So.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Anthony Brown	390	250	2,989	18	7
Ty Thompson	**15**	**7**	**87**	**2**	**1**
Jay Butterfield	**3**	**2**	**22**	**0**	**0**
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Travis Dye	211	1,271	6.0	16	
Anthony Brown	151	658	4.4	9	
Byron Cardwell	**61**	**417**	**6.8**	**3**	
CJ Verdell	78	406	5.2	6	
Seven McGee	**14**	**61**	**4.4**	**1**	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Devon Williams	35	557	15.9	4	
Kris Hutson	**31**	**419**	**13.5**	**2**	
Travis Dye	46	402	8.7	2	
Johnny Johnson III	25	311	12.4	1	
Troy Franklin	**18**	**209**	**11.6**	**2**	

KICKING: **Camden Lewis, 13-16 FGs, 94 pts.**
TACKLES: **Noah Sewell, 114;** Verone McKinley III, 79
SACKS: Kayvon Thibodeaux, 7.0
INTERCEPTIONS: Verone McKinley III, 6

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE DUCKS

Opposing Coaches Size Up Oregon

With Mario [Cristobal] and Willie [Taggart], the blueprint was obvious. They wanted to try to be a Northwest SEC program. With both of those guys leaving, you have to wonder if Oregon regrets going all-in on national candidates with no PNW ties. … I think they've struggled against elite teams because they've shuffled so many offensive identities. What's Kenny [Dillingham] going to do? Bo Nix is a solid game-manager who's been beat up; where's his head at? … They've been extremely active in the portal and NIL. They're going to have to be to stay in front and fight for that perception they're a national brand. With Nike behind them, they should be leading NIL. … No one knows what [Dan] Lanning's long-term plan is going to be for personnel. In the [Chip] Kelly era, they did a really good job in California and Texas and the PNW. This staff needs to double-down on working the West Coast if they want to stay consistent in the portal era. It's going to get harder and harder to keep guys from three time zones away in Eugene if they're getting national attention. Also, recruiting and developing guys from Georgia is way different than California and Oregon. Is Lanning ready for that? The fan base and the administration can't deal with another guy who gets hot and leaves town. They need a long-term plan to renew a lot of faith. It's not that Lanning can't do that; it's that no one's seen it yet."

OREGON STATE BEAVERS

National Forecast: 46 • Pac-12 North Prediction: 2 • Projected Record: 7-5, 5-4 Pac-12

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Jonathan Smith
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 16-28 (4 years)
CAREER RECORD: 16-28 (4 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Brian Lindgren
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Trent Bray
LOCATION: Corvallis, OR
STADIUM: Reser Stadium (26,407 – 2022 only)

KEY BEAVERS

OMAR SPEIGHTS, ILB A two-year starter who posted 89 tackles, including five for a loss, last season. For his career, Speights has 225 tackles.

CHANCE NOLAN, QB The fifth-year junior threw for 2,677 yards and 19 touchdowns in 12 starts last season. Nolan had the conference's second-highest passer rating in 2021.

LUKE MUSGRAVE, TE A big target at 6'6", 250, the nephew of Oregon legend Bill Musgrave caught 22 passes for 304 yards and a touchdown last season.

KEY LOSSES

AVERY ROBERTS, ILB Roberts led the Pac-12 in tackles in 2020 and 2021, earning all-conference first-team honors both seasons. Roberts averaged 10.7 tackles in 2021.

B.J. BAYLOR, RB Baylor ran for 1,337 yards (5.9 yards per carry) last season, making him the first Oregon State running back to lead the conference in rushing yards since Steven Jackson in 2003.

NATHAN ELDRIDGE, C The Beavers' most experienced offensive lineman, with a combined 46 starts at OSU and Arizona. A two-time first-team all-conference

RISING STAR

Texas native **DAMIEN MARTINEZ** graduated early from high school and joined the Beavers for spring practice, where the running back impressed with his size (6'0", 228 pounds) and speed. Martinez could become OSU's first freshman to start at running back since Jermar Jefferson in 2018. "Everybody's really excited about Damien and what he can potentially bring to the offense," says quarterback Chance Nolan.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Mathias Malaki-Donaldson, Edge, Westlake Vill., CA	★★★
2	Melvin Jordan IV, LB, Clearwater, FL	★★★
3	Damien Martinez, RB, Lewisville, TX	★★★
4	Quincy Wright, DL, Duncanville, TX	★★★
5	Dylan Lopez, OL, Bradenton, FL	★★★
6	Jack Velling, TE, Seattle, WA	★★★
7	Luka Vincic, OT, Bothell, WA	★★★
8	Noble Thomas, CB, Orange City, FL	★★★
9	Travis Throckmorton, QB, Simi Valley, CA	★★★
10	Sam Mason Jr., WR, Covina, CA	★★★
11	Takari Hickle, DL, Tenino, WA	★★★
12	Nathan Elu, OT, San Mateo, CA	★★★
13	Carlos Mack Jr., S, Clovis, CA	★★★
14	Kord Shaw, ATH, Ogden, UT	★★★
15	Jacob Strand, OT, Canby, OR	★★★
16	Ryan Cooper Jr., CB, Santa Clara, CA*	★★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite *junior college transfer

There is a window of opportunity for Oregon State heading into the 2022 season. Are the Beavers capable of climbing through and taking advantage?

The Pac-12 North is in chaos. Washington, Oregon and Washington State have new head coaches. Stanford is not the program it once was. California hasn't so much as shared a conference or division title since 2006.

Oregon State has momentum, coming off its first bowl appearance in eight years. The Beavers appear stable under fifth-year head coach Jonathan Smith. If the defense improves under new coordinator Trent Bray, and the Beavers get the quarterback right, OSU figures to be a prominent player in the Pac-12 North.

The guts of an offense that ranked among the conference's top five in rushing, total offense and scoring offense is back. The defense has a new attitude, promising pass rushers and depth in the secondary. There's confidence and consistency, as five of the 10 assistant coaches have been on the staff since Smith took control of the Beavers' program in 2018.

OFFENSE Though Smith didn't name a starting quarterback during the spring, Chance Nolan is the likely candidate. The fifth-year junior started 12 games during the 2021 season, passing for 2,677 yards and 19 touchdowns. What separates Nolan from others on the roster is his dual-threat ability. Nolan can extend plays with his legs and occasionally run when asked, rushing for 286 yards and three scores last season.

Senior Tristan Gebbia, who hasn't played since tearing his hamstring in November 2020 against Oregon, and redshirt freshman Ben Gulbranson, out last season after shoulder surgery, may push Nolan with a strong preseason camp.

The strength of OSU's offense is its running game. Though the Beavers lose first-team All-Pac-12 running back B.J. Baylor, they're deep in the backfield. Deshaun Fenwick ran for 448 yards and averaged 5.7 yards per carry last season, while Trey Lowe caught 23 passes as a third-down back. But it is the additions at running back that have Beaver fans talking, particularly freshman Damien Martinez. The 6'0", 228-pound Texas native looked the part of Oregon State's next star running back during spring practice after graduating early from high school.

"That kid's a stud. He came up all over the film all spring making great plays," Nolan says.

The Beavers' offensive line, one of the Pac-12's best a year ago, should be formidable again. Three-year starting right tackle Brandon Kipper moves inside to right guard, replaced at tackle by Taliese Fuaga. At 6'6" and some 330 pounds each, the Beavers have a mountain on the right side. The left side returns a pair with starting expeience in tackle Joshua Gray and guard Marco Brewer.

Leading the receiving corps are junior tight end Luke Musgrave and senior receiver Tre'Shaun Harrison, second on the team in receptions and receiving yards a year ago.

"If everybody takes a step in their game, I think we could be good," Smith says of the offense.

OMAR SPEIGHTS

Oregon State Athletics

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Boise State
Sept. 10	at Fresno State
Sept. 17	vs. Montana State #
Sept. 24	USC
Oct. 1	at Utah
Oct. 8	at Stanford
Oct. 15	Washington State
Oct. 22	Colorado
Nov. 4	at Washington
Nov. 12	California
Nov. 19	at Arizona State
Nov. 25	Oregon

#Portland, OR

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 7-6, 5-4 PAC-12

Sept. 4	at Purdue	L	21-30
Sept. 11	Hawaii	W	45-27
Sept. 18	Idaho	W	42-0
Sept. 25	at USC	W	45-27
Oct. 2	Washington	W	27-24
Oct. 9	at Washington State	L	24-31
Oct. 23	Utah	W	42-34
Oct. 30	at California	L	25-39
Nov. 6	at Colorado (ot)	L	34-37
Nov. 13	Stanford	W	35-14
Nov. 20	Arizona State	W	24-10
Nov. 27	at Oregon	L	29-38
Dec. 18	vs. Utah State #	L	13-24

#LA Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	PAC-12	NATIONAL
Scoring	31.2 ppg	4	44
Rushing	212.4 ypg	3	19
Passing	216.9 ypg	8	80
Total	429.3 ypg	4	42
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**PAC-12**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	25.8 ppg	6	60
Rushing	143.8 ypg	5	52
Passing	243.5 ypg	11	92
Total	387.4 ypg	9	73
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**PAC-12**	**NATIONAL**
+1	+0.08	6	64

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	28.3	85
Defense	30.3	96
Margin	-2.0	93
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	51.4%	4
Defense	43.6%	87
Margin	+7.8%	21
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	6.6	14
Defense	5.8	76
Margin	+0.8	38
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.9	8
Defense	4.2	76
Margin	+0.7	31
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	0.4	62
Actual	1	57
Margin	+0.6	58

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

49.6%

Oregon State's offense ranked first nationally in rushing success rate (49.6 percent), and the Beavers averaged 0.157 EPA/rush (11th).

50.3%

The Beavers defense had trouble getting off the field on third downs. Oregon State allowed opponents to convert on 50.3 percent of third-down attempts, ranking 122nd among FBS teams.

0.143

The Beavers ranked 32nd in passing explosiveness in 2021, averaging 0.143 EPA/pass. Oregon State generated 58 plays of 20-plus yards, 42nd nationally.

DEFENSE Oregon State is retooling its defense under Bray, who moves from inside linebackers coach to defensive coordinator in 2022. The high-energy Bray isn't married to the Beavers' former 3-4 scheme, as he'll mix looks up front and try to increase pressure on the quarterback.

"He's been here a couple years, and the connection he had with the players, knowing his energy and competitiveness, that was part of the reason we hired him," Smith says.

The Beavers are noticeably better on the edges, with junior John McCartan and Florida transfer Andrew Chatfield Jr. leading the way. OSU's defensive line, featuring two-year senior starter Simon Sandberg, hopes to get a boost with the return of Isaac Hodgins. A three-year starter, Hodgins missed the 2021 season with a broken foot.

Where OSU could see a significant upgrade is its secondary, where it added a second assistant coach in Anthony Perkins during the offseason. The Beavers were improved in pass coverage during spring practice. They'll need a boost, as OSU had one of the conference's worst pass defenses in 2021.

The Beavers return their starting cornerbacks in sophomore Alex Austin and senior Rejzohn Wright. Also back is nickel Jaydon Grant, who enters his seventh year in college with 28 career starts.

Leading the middle of Oregon State's defense is junior inside linebacker Omar Speights, a two-year starter who had 89 tackles last season.

SPECIALISTS The Beavers are in good shape here, as punter Luke Loecher and placekicker Everett Hayes return off solid seasons. Loecher averaged 47.1 yards per punt, which would have ranked among the top 10 nationally, but with 31 punts in 13 games, he didn't qualify. OSU opponents rarely did much with kickoffs, as Hayes had 52 touchbacks among 74 kickoff tries. The Beavers will have new faces among their kick and punt returners, jobs likely to be divided between speedsters Anthony Gould and Jesiah Irish.

FINAL ANALYSIS If Oregon State gets the QB right, this offense could be as productive as it was a year ago. The Beavers' defense has the personnel to increase its big-play capability. At a minimum, expectations are a return to the bowl scene. If OSU starts the season fast — no given, as it hasn't won an opener since 2015 — momentum could lead to a Pac-12 North title run.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

WR	0	Tre'Shaun Harrison (Sr.)	9	Makiya Tongue (So.)
WR	1	Tyjon Lindsey (Sr.)	22	Silas Bolden (So.)
WR	15	Anthony Gould (So.)	13	Jesiah Irish (Jr.)
LT	**67**	**Joshua Gray (So.)**	71	Tommy Spencer (So.)
LG	60	Marco Brewer (Jr.)	72	Nick Suing (So.)
C	**70**	**Jake Levengood (Jr.)**	61	Tanner Miller (So.)
RG	**68**	**Brandon Kipper (Sr.)**	62	Joe Quillin (So.)
RT	75	Taliese Fuaga (So.)	74	Brian Espinoza (So.)
TE	**88**	**Luke Musgrave (Jr.)**	81	Jake Overman (So.)
QB	**10**	**Chance Nolan (Jr.)**	3	Tristan Gebbia (Sr.)
RB	6	Damien Martinez (Fr.)	5	Deshaun Fenwick (Jr.)

DEFENSE (8)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	**99**	**Isaac Hodgins (Sr.)**	90	Sione Lolohea (So.)
DL	76	Thomas Sio (So.)	52	James Rawls (Jr.)
DE	**96**	**Simon Sandberg (Sr.)**	94	Tavis Shippen (Jr.)
OLB	10	Andrew Chatfield Jr. (Jr.)	**56**	**Riley Sharp (Jr.)**
ILB	**36**	**Omar Speights (Jr.)**	12	Jack Colletto (Sr.)
ILB	10	Kyrei Fisher (Sr.)	55	E. Mascarenas-Arnold (So.)
OLB	6	John McCartan (Jr.)	82	Cory Stover (So.)
CB	**5**	**Alex Austin (So.)**	4	Jaden Robinson (Jr.)
CB	**1**	**Rejzohn Wright (Sr.)**	21	Ron Hardge III (Sr.)
NB	**3**	**Jaydon Grant (Sr.)**	**28**	**Kitan Oladapo (Jr.)**
SS	7	Alton Julian (Jr.)	0	Akili Arnold (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	35	Everett Hayes (Jr.)	KR	15	Anthony Gould (So.)
P	38	Luke Loecher (Sr.)	PR	13	Jesiah Irish (Jr.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Chance Nolan	**318**	**204**	**2,677**	**19**	**10**
Sam Noyer	24	11	101	0	2
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
B.J. Baylor	227	1,337	5.9	13	
Deshaun Fenwick	**78**	**448**	**5.7**	**4**	
Trey Lowe	**56**	**359**	**6.4**	**1**	
Chance Nolan	**70**	**286**	**4.1**	**3**	
Jack Colletto	**31**	**144**	**4.6**	**8**	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Trevon Bradford	42	631	15.0	5	
Tre'Shaun Harrison	**29**	**401**	**13.8**	**3**	
Trey Lowe	**23**	**200**	**8.7**	**0**	
Luke Musgrave	**22**	**304**	**13.8**	**1**	
Zeriah Beason	20	236	11.8	1	

KICKING: **Everett Hayes, 12-18 FGs, 84 pts.**
TACKLES: Avery Roberts, 128; **Omar Speights, 89**
SACKS: Andrzej Hughes-Murray, 6.0
INTERCEPTIONS: 4 players tied with 2

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE BEAVERS

Opposing Coaches Size Up Oregon State

"They're quietly doing a really great job with this rebuild. [Jonathan] Smith has recruited the right kind of kids. … There's a sort of connection to Mike Riley there, too, at least on the field with that multiple use of tight ends and the run game. And there's a lot of that [Chris] Petersen shift and motion, too. … They're not impressive in any way; they're just competent and competitive. You have to respect how they've done it among all the turnover. They're like Utah in that they stay steady, they don't chase headlines, they just go to work. … With so many questions in this division, they could be poised to take a jump for a year or two. But I think internally, they'd admit that this isn't a program that sustains a nine-plus win record year after year. Historically, they're four, five, seven, 10 wins, then repeat. They have to sign, redshirt and develop, and that blueprint could be threatened by the portal. The advantage of having Smith is that he knows everything about that program and that culture in the region. You gotta recruit workers who want to stay around. … One thing that they've done a nice job is working Oregon and Washington better than the other three schools, honestly. They're more occupied with regional and national identities, and Oregon State has benefited by working really hard locally. … They're going to continue to improve right now. He's a legit program builder."

STANFORD CARDINAL

National Forecast: 69 • Pac-12 North Prediction: 6 • Projected Record: 4-8, 3-6 Pac-12

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: David Shaw
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 93-45 (11 years)
CAREER RECORD: 93-45 (11 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tavita Pritchard
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Lance Anderson
LOCATION: Stanford, CA
STADIUM: Stanford Stadium (50,424)

KEY CARDINAL

TANNER MCKEE, QB The 22-year-old sophomore is a potential first-round NFL draft choice. He possesses NFL size at 6'6", 226.

MICHAEL WILSON, WR Limited to four games each of the past two seasons, Wilson led the team with 56 catches for 672 yards and five touchdowns in 2019

KYU BLU KELLY, CB A 2021 second-team All-Pac-12 pick who was probably underrated even with the postseason recognition.

KEY LOSSES

AUSTIN JONES, RB Stanford's leading rusher in yards per game each of the past two seasons transferred to USC.

GABE REID, OLB Big-play linebacker transferred to Utah after collecting 30.5 tackles for a loss in his Stanford career.

THOMAS BOOKER, DL A two-time second-team All-Pac-12 pick anchored the Cardinal's defensive line.

RISING STAR

The highest-rated member of Stanford's 2022 recruiting class, four-star edge **DAVID BAILEY** enrolled during the spring and could be a major factor as a true freshman for a unit that needs him. Bailey was the nation's seventh-ranked edge recruit according to the 247Sports Composite, and Stanford beat out Alabama and USC, among others, for his services.

2022 RECRUITS

1	David Bailey, Edge, Santa Ana, CA	★★★★
2	Ernest Cooper IV, DL, Arlington, TX	★★★★
3	Tevarua Tafiti, LB, Honolulu, HI	★★★★
4	Fisher Anderson, OT, Franklin, TN	★★★★
5	Sam Roush, TE, Nashville, TN	★★★★
6	Arlen Harris Jr., RB, St. Peters, MO	★★★★
7	Lucas Heyer, OT, St. Paul, MN	★★★★
8	Jaxson Moi, DL, San Diego, CA	★★★
9	Mudia Reuben, WR, Riverside, MO	★★★
10	C.J. Hawkins, TE, Tampa, FL	★★★
11	Joshua Thompson, CB, Washington, DC	★★★
12	Kenji Swanson, OT, Chatsworth, CA	★★★
13	Zach Rowell, DL, Encinitas, CA	★★★
14	Collin Wright, S, Manvel, TX	★★★
15	Terian Williams II, ATH, Alpharetta, GA	★★★
16	Jake Maikkula, OT, Littleton, CO	★★★
17	Elic Ayomanor, WR, Deerfield, MA	★★★
18	Ashton Daniels, QB, Buford, GA	★★★
19	Jason Thompson, WR, Studio City, CA	★★★
20	Pat Caughey, DL, Morristown NJ	★★★
21	Benjamin Hudson, LB, Las Vegas, NV	★★★
22	Matt Rose, LB, Broadview Heights, OH	★★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite

After earning bowl bids 10 straight years, Stanford has gone three consecutive seasons without a postseason berth. The Cardinal are no longer a national power and are just trying to be competitive in the Pac-12 after a perplexing 2021 season. Stanford had wins over then-No. 14 USC and then-No. 3 Oregon early in the season but then lost the remaining seven games on the schedule. "Started slow, got exciting for a little bit, then fell off the table," says head coach David Shaw. Stanford's 3–9 record in 2021 was its worst since 2006. Despite the presence of an NFL-caliber quarterback, Stanford's inability to run the ball and stop the run — which were the Cardinal's strengths when they were going to bowls regularly — plagued Stanford all season and are likely to be problems again in 2022.

OFFENSE The Cardinal should have an outstanding passing game, as long as they can keep their quarterback upright. Quarterback Tanner McKee is in his second season as a starter, and he showed NFL-level potential last season. "He'll be one of the best guys in America this year," Shaw says.

However, his production tailed off the second half of the 2021 season; he threw four TD passes with seven interceptions in his final five outings after tossing 11 touchdown passes with no picks in his first five games.

Stanford has plenty of receiving talent. Last year's top two receivers, tight end Benjamin Yurosek (43 rec., 658 yds., three TDs) and wideout Elijah Higgins (45, 500, four TDs) are back and are joined by two high-level wide receivers whose 2021 seasons were cut short by injuries — Michael Wilson and Brycen Tremayne.

The question is whether the offensive line, which is experienced but has been ineffective, can provide McKee the two things he needs to be productive — protection and a running game. "That's one of the biggest jumps we have to make," Shaw says of his offensive line, which allowed 31 sacks last season.

Left tackle Walter Rouse (29 career starts) and left guard Barrett Miller (26 consecutive starts) are the best of an offensive line that returns all its starters. But that group has yet to show that it can run block effectively. The Cardinal ranked last in the conference and 126th out of 130 Division I teams in rushing yards per game in 2021 (86.9). Making matters worse, Stanford lost its top two running backs from last season. Austin Jones (transferred to USC) and Nathaniel Peat (transferred to Missouri) accounted for 782 of Stanford's 1,047 rushing yards in 2021. The Cardinal will rely on E.J. Smith, who is the son of Emmitt Smith and showed promise last season when he averaged 5.1 yards per carry, and Casey Filkins.

DEFENSE Stanford's ineffectiveness on defense led to a significant change from the 3-4 alignment it had used for years to a four-man front. Defensive ends and outside linebackers have been replaced on the Cardinal's roster list with edge designations. "We don't have those big, wide bodies that you use in the thirty-four," Shaw says. "We've got smaller, quicker, more athletic guys."

TANNER MCKEE

Peter Brouillet

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Colgate
Sept. 10	USC
Sept. 24	at Washington
Oct. 1	at Oregon
Oct. 8	Oregon State
Oct. 15	at Notre Dame
Oct. 22	Arizona State
Oct. 29	at UCLA
Nov. 5	Washington State
Nov. 12	at Utah
Nov. 19	at California
Nov. 26	BYU

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 3-9, 2-7 PAC-12

Sept. 4	vs. Kansas State #	L	7-24
Sept. 11	at USC	W	42-28
Sept. 18	at Vanderbilt	W	41-23
Sept. 25	UCLA	L	24-35
Oct. 2	Oregon (ot)	W	31-24
Oct. 8	at Arizona State	L	10-28
Oct. 16	at Washington State	L	31-34
Oct. 30	Washington	L	13-20
Nov. 5	Utah	L	7-52
Nov. 13	at Oregon State	L	14-35
Nov. 20	California	L	11-41
Nov. 27	Notre Dame	L	14-45

#Arlington, TX

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	PAC-12	NATIONAL
Scoring	20.4 ppg	10	113
Rushing	86.9 ypg	12	126
Passing	215.2 ypg	9	81
Total	302.1 ypg	11	122
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**PAC-12**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	32.4 ppg	12	106
Rushing	235.7 ypg	12	127
Passing	215.6 ypg	4	45
Total	451.2 ypg	12	114
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**PAC-12**	**NATIONAL**
-10	-0.83	11	123

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	29.7	47
Defense	26.7	17
Margin	+3.0	22
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	37.0%	116
Defense	48.6%	122
Margin	-11.6%	123
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	5.2	104
Defense	6.6	115
Margin	-1.4	111
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	3.8	98
Defense	4.7	117
Margin	-0.9	112
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	-4.0	114
Actual	-10	123
Margin	-6.0	115

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

42.2%

Only 42.2 percent of Stanford's drives resulted in quality possessions, ranking the Cardinal 97th among FBS offenses. Stanford scored 3.90 points per quality possession, 111th in college football.

11.1

Stanford allowed 11.1 yards per successful rush in 2021. The Cardinal ranked 127th in rushing efficiency, allowing a 48.8 percent rushing success rate.

115

The Cardinal were successful in converting only 33.1 percent of their third-down attempts, ranking them 115th nationally.

The Cardinal ranked last in the Pac-12 in total defense last season, yielding 451.2 yards per game and an alarming 6.49 yards per play, but they were particularly ineffective against the run, ranking last in the Pac-12 and 127th in FBS in rushing yards allowed per game (235.7). Stanford allowed 5.72 yards per rushing attempt, which was last in the conference by a wide margin.

Much of the problem was in the front three, and the loss of its two best defensive linemen, second-team all-conference defensive end Thomas Booker and Dalyn Wade-Perry, will not help. Tobin Phillips, who started one game last season, is the only current defensive lineman who has started a college game, so the Cardinal will continue to be vulnerable in the middle of their defensive front.

Freshman David Bailey and sophomore Aaron Armitage have shown considerable potential at the edge position, and the Cardinal hope that potential turns to big-play production in 2022.

The Cardinal have two experienced linebackers in Levani Damuni and Ricky Miezan, who were the team's top two tacklers last season, but if Stanford has a strength on defense, it is in the secondary, which features second-team all-conference cornerback Kyu Blu Kelly. Kendall Williamson (28 career starts) and Patrick Fields, a three-year starter at Oklahoma before transferring, provide solid play at safety.

SPECIALISTS The Cardinal have a solid placekicker and punter. Kicker Joshua Karty made 10-of-15 field-goal attempts last season with a long of 51 yards, and punter Ryan Sanborn averaged 43.3 yards per kick in 2021, with 19 downed inside the opponent's 20-yard line. Filkins and Wilson are expected to handle the return duties, and both are above average in that department, although Stanford may be reluctant to use Wilson extensively as a returner because of his history of injuries.

FINAL ANALYSIS McKee should put up some big passing numbers for the Cardinal, but the absence of a reliable run game and shortcomings in the interior of the defensive line will put too much pressure on him to be perfect in every game. Stanford again will struggle to stop the run, and unless the offensive and defensive lines are better than expected, Shaw is looking at another losing season with little chance of contending in the Pac-12 North.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (10)

WR	**4**	**Michael Wilson (Sr.)**	5	John Humphreys (Jr.)
WR	**6**	**Elijah Higgins (Sr.)**	25	Bryce Farrell (Jr.)
WR	**81**	**Brycen Tremayne (Sr.)**	19	Silas Starr (Jr.)
LT	**75**	**Walter Rouse (Sr.)**	71	Connor McLaughlin (Jr.)
LG	**63**	**Barrett Miller (Sr.)**	57	Levi Rogers (Jr.)
C	**60**	**Drake Nugent (Sr.)**	55	Drake Metcalf (Jr.)
RG	**66**	**Branson Bragg (Sr.)**	73	Jake Hornibrook (Sr.)
RT	**78**	**Myles Hinton (Jr.)**	74	James Pogorelc (Jr.)
TE	**84**	**Benjamin Yurosek (Jr.)**	86	Sam Roush (Fr.)
QB	**18**	**Tanner McKee (Jr.)**	11	Ari Patu (So.)
RB	22	E.J. Smith (Jr.)	2	Casey Filkins (Jr.)

DEFENSE (4)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

EDGE	15	Stephen Herron (Sr.)	5	Wilfredo Aybar (So.)
DL	40	Tobin Phillips (Jr.)	99	Zephron Lester (Jr.)
DL	94	Anthony Franklin (So.)	98	Zach Buckey (So.)
EDGE	9	Aaron Armitage (So.)	23	David Bailey (Fr.)
LB	**3**	**Levani Damuni (Sr.)**	8	Tristan Sinclair (Sr.)
LB	**45**	**Ricky Miezan (Sr.)**	10	Spencer Jorgensen (Sr.)
LB	14	Jacob Mangum-Farrar (Sr.)	30	Ese Dubre (So.)
CB	**17**	**Kyu Blu Kelly (Sr.)**	13	Ethan Bonner (Sr.)
CB	4	Salim Turner-Muhammad (Sr.)	6	Nicolas Toomer (Sr.)
SS	**21**	**Kendall Williamson (Sr.)**	33	Alaka'i Gilman (Jr.)
FS	24	Patrick Fields (Sr.)	32	Mitch Leigber (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	43	Joshua Karty (Jr.)	**KR**	2	Casey Filkins (Jr.)
P	27	Ryan Sanborn (Sr.)	**PR**	2	Casey Filkins (Jr.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	**ATT**	**COMP**	**YDS**	**TD**	**INT**
Tanner McKee	**315**	**206**	**2,327**	**15**	**7**
Jack West	30	20	135	0	3
Ari Patu	**16**	**8**	**48**	**1**	**1**
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Austin Jones	79	404	5.1	3	
Nathaniel Peat	107	378	3.5	2	
E.J. Smith	**26**	**133**	**5.1**	**1**	
Isaiah Sanders	22	66	3.0	3	
Casey Filkins	**11**	**44**	**4.0**	**0**	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Elijah Higgins	**45**	**500**	**11.1**	**4**	
Benjamin Yurosek	**43**	**658**	**15.3**	**3**	
Austin Jones	32	267	8.3	1	
John Humphreys	**21**	**287**	**13.7**	**1**	
Brycen Tremayne	**19**	**240**	**12.6**	**5**	

KICKING: **Joshua Karty, 10-15 FGs, 57 pts.**
TACKLES: **Levani Damuni, 87; Ricky Miezan, 68**
SACKS: **Stephen Herron, 3.0**
INTERCEPTIONS: **Kyu Blu Kelly, 2; Jonathan McGill, 2**

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE CARDINAL

Opposing Coaches Size Up Stanford

"This program is really starting to show its age, and they're out of buzz right now. There's been so much coaching talent on that staff the last 15 years, and they've all left for NFL jobs or HC jobs. … Last year, they were really, really big, but just as slow. We noticed that right away and adjusted to it. … They're always going to have good offensive and defensive linemen, and they're going to have good tight ends, and now you expect them to be average or below-average at the skill positions. That's the biggest change from the [Andrew] Luck and [Kevin] Hogan eras. Have those positions dropped off because of scheme? It's worth asking because they don't innovate. It's shift and motion and deception to leverage your fronts, but they've been doing that for 15 years now. … They played a lot of underclassmen last year, which is a bonus now, provided some of those guys become standouts. … Don't put a ton of stock into that recruiting class; USC is in transition, and most of the programs in the league are dipping more into the portal. Stanford can't do that. They've got to work the national net on high school recruiting and then develop guys. That's going to get harder and harder in the portal era. … The biggest success they could have this year is bringing on that younger group of starters and showing something that's specific to this season. Just anything different."

WASHINGTON HUSKIES

National Forecast: 52 • Pac-12 North Prediction: 3 • Projected Record: 7-5, 5-4 Pac-12

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Kalen DeBoer
RECORD AT SCHOOL: First Season
CAREER RECORD: 79-9 (7 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Ryan Grubb
DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS: William Inge, Chuck Morrell
LOCATION: Seattle, WA
STADIUM: Husky Stadium (70,083)

KEY HUSKIES

ZION TUPUOLA-FETUI, OLB Collected seven sacks in four games in 2020 and was an All-American and All-Pac-12 performer before missing most of last season with injuries. He considered turning pro but returns to Seattle to play for his third head coach in his five seasons with the Huskies.

ROME ODUNZE, WR The Huskies' leading receiver with 41 catches for 415 yards and four touchdowns, he should flourish in the new spread offense. He's also a contributor on special teams.

JALEN MCMILLAN, WR Odunze's running mate had 39 catches for 470 yards and three scores, all numbers he should be able to double as the Huskies spread things out. The duo should combine to give Washington a potent receiving corps.

KEY LOSSES

TRENT MCDUFFIE, CB All-Pac-12 defender permitted 111 receiving yards in coverage last season, fewest in the Pac-12 since 2014, and no TDs. Drafted 21st overall as the third cornerback taken in the 2022 NFL Draft.

KYLER GORDON, CB Another All-Pac-12 selection at corner, he held his own while teams threw at him rather than McDuffie, tying for the team lead with two interceptions.

CADE OTTON, TE A 35-game starter, the 2020 All-Pac-12 pick moves on with 91 career catches for 1,026 yards and nine scores. He also has superb blocking skills.

RISING STAR

GEIREAN HATCHETT, a redshirt freshman and one of Washington's most heavily recruited offensive linemen in recent years, could make the jump from a third-team center who has yet to play in a game to the starter. He's one of the strongest players on the roster. He could also slide over and play one of the guard spots.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Ryan Otton, TE, Olympia, WA	★★★★
2	Tristan Dunn, S, Sumner, WA	★★★
3	Parker Brailsford, OL, Scottsdale, AZ	★★★
4	Lance Holtzclaw, Edge, Mesa, AZ	★★★
5	Denzel Boston, WR, Puyallup, WA	★★★
6	Jaivion Green, S, Houston, TX	★★★
7	Demario King, S, Los Alamitos, CA*	★★★
8	Armon Parker, DL, Dearborn, MI	★★★
9	Jayvon Parker, DL, Dearborn, MI	★★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite *junior college transfer

The offensively challenged Huskies opened the 2021 season by scoring a lone touchdown in a loss to FCS Montana, an ominous sign of things to come. In continually struggling to put points on the board, they couldn't beat anyone convincingly, and the losses piled up. UW fired run-first offensive coordinator John Donovan after eight games, with head coach Jimmy Lake let go a week later.

Enter Kalen DeBoer to clean up this mess.

Few teams were more confounding than the 2021 Huskies, who were ranked 20th nationally to begin the season with a veteran roster and proceeded to do a 4–8 faceplant.

DeBoer comes to Seattle after his offense averaged 464.8 yards and 33.4 points per game at Fresno State, putting to shame UW's tepid numbers of 323.4 and 21.5. He has promised to put a high-octane offense on display, primarily by passing the football, and to reload rather than do a complete rebuild.

OFFENSE One of the first things DeBoer did was to hand-pick a quarterback to go with what he inherited. He added Indiana transfer Michael Penix Jr. to go with two-year UW starter Dylan Morris and one-time five-star recruit Sam Huard. Penix and Huard are lefthanders. All three have started at the college level. Penix, 12–5 as the Hoosiers' starter, might have the edge in comprehending the new spread offense because he ran it for DeBoer, who was offensive coordinator at the Big Ten school in 2019.

The strength of this team could be a receiver corps that returns three talented players in Rome Odunze (41 receptions), Jalen McMillan (39) and one-time Texas Tech transfer Ja'Lynn Polk. Joining them will be Taj Davis (26 receptions, 12.7 ypr), Giles Jackson, who came from Michigan last year, and Arizona State transfer Lonyatta Alexander Jr. For tight ends, the new staff described part-time starters Devin Culp and Jack Westover as "wildly athletic."

DeBoer's staff had heard how the Huskies' offensive line greatly under-performed, but he was pleasantly surprised to find a surplus of young, capable linemen. This group is headed up by two-time All-Pac-12 offensive tackle Jaxson Kirkland, back for a sixth season to improve his NFL draft stock. Victor Curne and Henry Bainivalu are two-year starters, with Curne moving from tackle to guard. The new staff is enthused about redshirt freshmen Roger Rosengarten, Geirean Hatchett and Myles Murao, each of whom could be a potential starter right away.

Running back should have been well-stocked with seven scholarship players, including four from Texas, yet only two — New Mexico transfer Aaron Dumas and holdover Jay'Veon Sunday — were available during one stretch of spring practice. DeBoer brought Dumas in after watching him run for 143 yards against Fresno State. The Huskies still haven't unveiled Texas running back Emeka Megwa, who picked the UW over Alabama, passed up his high school senior year and arrived with an injury.

ZION TUPUOLA-FETUI

Scott Eklund/Washington Athletics

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Kent State
Sept. 10	Portland State
Sept. 17	Michigan State
Sept. 24	Stanford
Sept. 30	at UCLA
Oct. 8	at Arizona State
Oct. 15	Arizona
Oct. 22	at California
Nov. 4	Oregon State
Nov. 12	at Oregon
Nov. 19	Colorado
Nov. 26	at Washington State

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 4-8, 3-6 PAC-12

Sept. 4	Montana	L	7-13
Sept. 11	at Michigan	L	10-31
Sept. 18	Arkansas State	W	52-3
Sept. 25	California (ot)	W	31-24
Oct. 2	at Oregon State	L	24-27
Oct. 16	UCLA	L	17-24
Oct. 22	at Arizona	W	21-16
Oct. 30	at Stanford	W	20-13
Nov. 6	Oregon	L	16-26
Nov. 13	Arizona State	L	30-35
Nov. 20	at Colorado	L	17-20
Nov. 26	Washington State	L	13-40

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	PAC-12	NATIONAL
Scoring	21.5 ppg	9	107
Rushing	98.4 ypg	11	125
Passing	225.0 ypg	5	73
Total	323.4 ypg	10	114
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**PAC-12**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	22.7 ppg	4	36
Rushing	193.6 ypg	11	108
Passing	143.3 ypg	1	1
Total	336.9 ypg	2	23
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**PAC-12**	**NATIONAL**
-8	-0.67	10	118

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	28.7	72
Defense	30.9	102
Margin	-2.2	99
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	41.8%	77
Defense	44.0%	89
Margin	-2.2%	91
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	5.1	110
Defense	5.1	22
Margin	+0.0	80
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.0	82
Defense	3.4	16
Margin	+0.6	37
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	0.2	67
Actual	-7	107
Margin	-7.2	122

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

0.184

Washington's defense allowed 0.184 EPA/rush (119th in FBS). Opponents rushed 7.7 percent more against Washington than the average team.

58.1%

Washington's offense avoided third downs at a rate of 58.1 percent, 128th in the nation. When they did face third down, the Huskies had an average distance of 6.32 yards to go and converted 41.7 percent of their tries (68th in the nation).

35

Washington had just 35 plays go for 20 or more yards, 112th in the country.

DEFENSE Playmakers abound for the UW stop unit, but the trick is to get them all healthy again. That means returning edge rusher Zion Tupuola-Fetui to 2020 form, when he was one of the nation's most disruptive forces (7.0 sacks, three forced fumbles) and a second-team All-American. He got a late start to the 2021 season and then dealt with an Achilles injury and a concussion. A healthy ZTF makes the defense fearsome.

For two seasons, the undersized defensive line has been a problem and was largely responsible for the 193.6 rushing yards allowed per game in 2021. DeBoer and his staff got creative here by moving the space-eating Ulumoo Ale, a 6'6", 344-pounder, to the defense from offensive guard, where he appeared in all 12 games, with six starts, in 2021. He's five inches taller and 40 pounds heavier than returning starter Tuli Letuligasenoa.

Another big-play defender, linebacker Edefuan Ulofoshio, remains out. He missed half of last season with an arm injury and tore up a knee in winter conditioning and is not expected back until midseason. DeBoer still has highly capable linebackers in Pittsburgh transfer Cam Bright, a 20-game ACC starter, and Carson Bruener, who replaced Ulofoshio last season and was a sensation.

The secondary needs a lot of work. Both starting cornerbacks left for the NFL Draft, and seven different players started at safety. Safety Alex Cook is back for a third season as a starter and will be the leader of this group, while Asa Turner returns for a fourth season as a part-time starter. DeBoer brought in All-Big Sky pick Jordan Perryman from UC Davis to help shore up the corner spots.

SPECIALISTS The Huskies are set at placekicker with senior Peyton Henry, who's made 52-of-66 field-goal attempts over four seasons, and at punter with Idaho State transfer Kevin Ryan, who was fifth in FCS with a 45.6-yard average.

FINAL ANALYSIS DeBoer will find out soon enough just how far his rebuilding project has to go when Michigan State, a Big Ten heavyweight, visits Seattle in his third game. He has 41 players who've been starters at the UW or elsewhere. He needs to crank up the offense, which is his specialty. The Huskies should be good enough to double their win total and become bowl eligible again.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

WR	**1**	**Rome Odunze (So.)**	17	Taj Davis (So.)
WR	**11**	**Jalen McMillan (So.)**	0	Giles Jackson (Jr.)
WR	2	Ja'Lynn Polk (Fr.)	4	Lonyatta Alexander Jr. (Fr.)
LT	**51**	**Jaxson Kirkland (Sr.)**	73	Roger Rosengarten (Fr.)
LG	**79**	**Victor Curne (Jr.)**	50	Myles Murao (Fr.)
C	56	Geirean Hatchett (Fr.)	74	Corey Luciano (Sr.)
RG	**66**	**Henry Bainivalu (Sr.)**	71	Nate Kalepo (So.)
RT	55	Troy Fautanu (So.)	77	Julius Buelow (So.)
TE	83	Devin Culp (Jr.)	37	Jack Westover (Jr.)
QB	9	Michael Penix Jr. (Jr.)	7	Sam Huard (Fr.)
RB	32	Aaron Dumas (So.)	26	Jay'Veon Sunday (So.)

DEFENSE (3)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DT	**91**	**Tuli Letuligasenoa (Jr.)**	90	Voi Tunuufi (So.)
DT	68	Ulumoo Ale (Jr.)	98	Kuao Peihopa (Fr.)
OLB	8	Bralen Trice (So.)	17	Sav'ell Smalls (So.)
ILB	2	Cam Bright (Sr.)	11	Alphonzo Tuputala (So.)
ILB	42	Carson Bruener (So.)	15	Daniel Heimuli (So.)
OLB	**58**	**Zion Tupuola-Fetui (Jr.)**	3	Jeremiah Martin (Sr.)
CB	23	Mishael Powell (So.)	16	Davon Banks (Fr.)
CB	1	Jordan Perryman (Sr.)	25	Elijah Jackson (Fr.)
NB	7	Dominique Hampton (Jr.)	13	Kamren Fabiculanan (So.)
S	**5**	**Alex Cook (Sr.)**	6	Cameron Williams (Jr.)
S	20	Asa Turner (Jr.)	29	Julius Irvin (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	47	Peyton Henry (Sr.)	**KR**	0	Giles Jackson (Jr.)
P	90	Kevin Ryan (Sr.)	**PR**	0	Giles Jackson (Jr.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	**ATT**	**COMP**	**YDS**	**TD**	**INT**
Dylan Morris	**363**	**220**	**2,458**	**14**	**12**
Sam Huard	**42**	**22**	**241**	**1**	**4**
Patrick O'Brien	3	1	1	0	0
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Sean McGrew	110	434	3.9	8	
Cameron Davis	**85**	**308**	**3.6**	**2**	
Kamari Pleasant	57	308	5.4	2	
Richard Newton	**39**	**138**	**3.5**	**1**	
Giles Jackson	**8**	**45**	**5.6**	**0**	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Rome Odunze	**41**	**415**	**10.1**	**4**	
Jalen McMillan	**39**	**470**	**12.1**	**3**	
Cade Otton	28	250	8.9	1	
Terrell Bynum	26	436	16.8	4	
Taj Davis	**26**	**329**	**12.7**	**1**	

KICKING: **Peyton Henry, 11-14 FGs, 59 pts.**
TACKLES: Jackson Sirmon, 92; **Carson Bruener, 70**
SACKS: **Faatui Tuitele, 3.0; Voi Tunuufi, 3.0**
INTERCEPTIONS: Kyler Gordon, 2; **Asa Turner, 2**

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE HUSKIES

Opposing Coaches Size Up Washington

"What happened to Jimmy Lake is still a mystery to a lot of us. The guy you saw in the media last year wasn't the Jimmy a lot of us knew. That [head coaching] chair changes you, and I think the expectations and reality at UW have always been way out of alignment. … There's a disconnect at UW that they're Notre Dame or Michigan. They aren't. They never have been. Take a guy like [Chris] Petersen — they didn't recruit like 'an academic' or an SEC team. They won on development, scheme and culture. That got sideways when he left. … The new staff is the polar opposite of what Lake was doing publicly. Very salt of the earth. Just pure ball coaching. … Everything is in place to be successful if they're given enough time. I think you'll see a big jump on offense right away, in part because that last offensive scheme was a huge mess. [Michael] Penix coming in will be good for the entire QB room, and that staff schemes really well. There's talent at the skill positions; they just need a refresh. … Defensively, they're going to look very different, and they've got a lot of position turnover. … Give them time and they're going to score points. The rest of it will be under construction this year. … Kalen [DeBoer] isn't going to care about making national noise like Oregon or USC. They're going to scrap all that hype and just coach ball."

WASHINGTON STATE COUGARS

National Forecast: 60 • Pac-12 North Prediction: 4 • Projected Record: 6-6, 4-5 Pac-12

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Jake Dickert
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 3-3 (1 year)
CAREER RECORD: 3-3 (1 year)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Eric Morris
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Brian Ward
LOCATION: Pullman, WA
STADIUM: Martin Stadium (32,952)

KEY COUGARS

DE'ZHAUN STRIBLING, WR Hawaii product led all Pac-12 freshmen in receptions (44), receiving yards (471) and touchdowns (five) during a breakout year.

RON STONE JR., DE Stone, a highly disruptive force on the edge, was named first-team All-Pac-12 after recording 11.5 tackles for a loss and five sacks.

ARMANI MARSH, NB Marsh, a Spokane product, intercepted three passes, including a pick-6 in the Cougars' decisive Apple Cup win over Washington.

KEY LOSSES

JAYDEN DE LAURA, QB Transferred to Arizona after throwing 28 touchdowns in 15 starts with Cougars. Had a solid 23-to-9 TD-to-INT ratio in 2021.

ABRAHAM LUCAS, RT Four-time All-Pac-12 selection started in 42 of 43 possible career games.

JAYLEN WATSON, CB Watson became the first WSU cornerback to be drafted since Karl Paymah (2005).

RISING STAR

CAMERON WARD was one of the most coveted quarterbacks on the transfer market with offers from Ole Miss, Houston and Indiana, but the Incarnate Word standout ultimately followed offensive coordinator Eric Morris to Pullman. Ward tossed 71 touchdowns and just 14 interceptions in two seasons at the FCS level.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Andre Dollar, TE, Mustang, OK	★★★
2	Taariq Al-Uqdah, LB, Inglewood, CA	★★★
3	Djouvensky Schlenbaker, RB, Bellingham, WA	★★★
4	Eric Wilder, OT, Syracuse, UT	★★★
5	Javan Robinson, CB, Winter Garden, FL	★★★
6	Hudson Cedarland, LB, Gig Harbor, WA	★★★
7	Jakobus Seth, Edge, Arlington, WA	★★★
8	Jaylen Jenkins, RB, Allen, TX	★★★
9	Zack Miller, OT, Orange, CA	★★★
10	Leyton Smithson, WR, Bellingham, WA	★★★
11	Kendall Williams, DL, San Diego, CA	★★★
12	Tony Carter, LB, Jacksonville, FL	★★★
13	Bryce Grays, S, Sugar Land, TX	★★★
14	David Johnson, WR, Hooks, TX	★★★
15	John Mateer, QB, Little Elm, TX	★★★
16	Sam Lockett III, S, Spokane, WA*	★★★
17	Luke Roaten, DL, Tomball, TX	★★★
18	Landon Roaten, OT, Tomball, TX	★★★
19	Reece Sylvester, S, Baytown, TX	★★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite *junior college transfer

For nearly three months last season, Washington State struggled to get through a press conference without inquiries about the vaccination status of then-head coach Nick Rolovich. After failing to comply with a state mandate, Rolovich was removed, and the Cougars appointed defensive coordinator Jake Dickert as acting head coach. Promptly after leading WSU to its first Apple Cup win in nearly a decade, Dickert had his interim tag removed. Now the former Wyoming DC guides WSU into a season in which distractions away from the field shouldn't detract from the product on it.

Dickert overhauled the offensive staff, brought in a transfer quarterback and hired a new defensive coordinator, so it's too early to know whether the on-field product will be strong enough to get the Cougars back to the postseason for the eighth time in 10 years. But the 38-year-old has unequivocal support from players, administrators and boosters who've commended the way he handled the unprecedented, at-times tumultuous events of 2021. Now that the honeymoon stage is over, they'll be grading Dickert on how he fares in the win-loss column.

"I thought we did a great job in eight weeks of building a culture," Dickert says. "I think we've got a tight team and a team that understands who we need to be and who we want to be. We're heading in that direction every day."

OFFENSE Cameron Ward hadn't taken a snap in spring practice when he was listed among 20 of the country's top players with +5000 odds to win the 2022 Heisman Trophy, according to BetMGM. The FCS Incarnate Word transfer was virtually handed WSU's starting QB job when he arrived, replacing Jayden de Laura after the two-year starter's departure for Arizona.

The former Southland Conference star threw for 4,648 yards and 47 touchdowns in 2021 on his way to becoming a Walter Payton Award finalist, and he's already familiar with the Air Raid scheme that former Incarnate Word offensive coordinator Eric Morris has installed at WSU — a more run-oriented twist on the system devised by Hal Mumme and former Cougars head coach Mike Leach.

"I like that it's a quarterback-driven offense," Ward says. "The quarterback has to know everything from the O-line to the receivers to the running backs, and also that we throw the ball a lot. I'm a big person, and I love to throw the ball."

The Cougars could have an ace at QB, but they're unproven elsewhere in the backfield after losing Max Borghi and Deon McIntosh, running backs who accounted for 15 of the team's 19 rushing TDs in 2021. Presumptive starter Nakia Watson will need to prove he can be more effective than his showing in the Sun Bowl, where the ex-Wisconsin backup rushed 17 times for 62 yards.

The offensive line is the biggest point of concern on this side of the ball after losing three starters. Jarrett Kingston has started a handful of games at both guard and tackle, and the Cougars may rely on the experience of Northern Colorado transfer Grant Stephens, although the All-Big Sky tackle won't arrive until fall camp.

DE'ZHAUN STRIBLING

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Idaho
Sept. 10	at Wisconsin
Sept. 17	Colorado State
Sept. 24	Oregon
Oct. 1	California
Oct. 8	at USC
Oct. 15	at Oregon State
Oct. 27	Utah
Nov. 5	at Stanford
Nov. 12	Arizona State
Nov. 19	at Arizona
Nov. 26	Washington

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 7-6, 6-3 PAC-12

Sept. 4	Utah State	L	23-26
Sept. 11	Portland State	W	44-24
Sept. 18	USC	L	14-45
Sept. 25	at Utah	L	13-24
Oct. 2	at California	W	21-6
Oct. 9	Oregon State	W	31-24
Oct. 16	Stanford	W	34-31
Oct. 23	BYU	L	19-21
Oct. 30	at Arizona State	W	34-21
Nov. 13	at Oregon	L	24-38
Nov. 19	Arizona	W	44-18
Nov. 26	at Washington	W	40-13
Dec. 31	vs. Central Michigan #	L	21-24

#Sun Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	PAC-12	NATIONAL
Scoring	27.8 ppg	7	71
Rushing	121.3 ypg	10	107
Passing	257.3 ypg	2	38
Total	378.6 ypg	8	81
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**PAC-12**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	24.2 ppg	5	47
Rushing	160.5 ypg	7	80
Passing	216.8 ypg	5	47
Total	377.3 ypg	6	63
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**PAC-12**	**NATIONAL**
+11	+0.85	1	7

Oliver McKenna/Icon Sportswire via Getty Images

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	29.9	43
Defense	29.6	82
Margin	+0.3	60
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	42.8%	68
Defense	43.5%	85
Margin	-0.7%	76
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	5.9	71
Defense	5.6	60
Margin	+0.3	66
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.5	32
Defense	3.7	35
Margin	+0.8	17
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	8.7	2
Actual	11	9
Margin	+2.3	45

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

4.01

Washington State showed some defensive improvement in 2021, holding opponents to 4.01 points per quality possession to rank 21st nationally.

43.8%

Opposing offenses averaged a 43.8 percent rushing success rate against Washington State (59th nationally). The Cougars allowed 19 rushing touchdowns and 5.26 yards per rush in 2021.

38.5%

Washington State converted 38.5 percent of its third-down attempts, 100th in the FBS. They faced a third down on 49.9 percent of all their sets of downs, ranking 96th in the nation.

Ward's protection may be shaky, but he won't lack capable targets. Renard Bell (147 career receptions) is back for his seventh season in Pullman, and De'Zhaun Stribling returns after a breakout freshman season. Unlike Leach's, Morris' rendition of the Air Raid occasionally calls on tight ends, so you can expect to see Andre Dollar and Moon Ashby in certain offensive packages.

DEFENSE Two years ago, Dickert inherited a pair of young, promising edge rushers in Ron Stone Jr. and Brennan Jackson. You'll be hard-pressed to find a more disruptive duo in the Pac-12 in 2022 after the all-conference performers — Stone a first-teamer, Jackson an honorable mention choice — combined for nine sacks and 17.5 tackles for a loss last season. Wedged between those two will be some combination of Amir Mujahid, Antonio Pule, Ahmir Crowder and Virginia transfer Nusi Malani.

Jahad Woods and Justus Rogers leave after each appearing in 56 career games — a school record — but there may not be much of a drop-off at linebacker as the Cougars bring in hard-hitting Nevada transfer Daiyan Henley, who chose WSU over USC, Washington and Kansas State. Expect Henley to start alongside former four-star recruit Travion Brown.

The Cougars didn't just poach Nevada's DC, Brian Ward, and one of its starting linebackers, Henley — they also grabbed former Nevada safety Jordan Lee from the transfer portal. Lee's experience and physicality will buoy a secondary that brings back starting corner Derrick Langford and nickel Armani Marsh.

SPECIALISTS Dean Janikowski was voted the Pac-12's best placekicker after earning all-league first team honors in 2021. Janikowski led the Pac-12 in field goal percentage (82.4). Strong-legged sophomore Nick Haberer returns at punter, but the Cougars will need to identify new candidates on kick and punt return without the elusive Travell Harris in 2022.

FINAL ANALYSIS If QB Ward can make a successful leap to the Power 5 level, the Cougars have enough pass-catching options to be dynamic on offense, even with looming questions at running back and offensive line. Defensive transfers at all three levels may have to deliver in order for WSU to find success on that side of the ball, but as long as the Cougars come out of the non-conference slate with at least two wins, they should be well-positioned for another bowl berth.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)				
WR	**6**	**Donovan Ollie (So.)**	89	Tsion Nunnally (Fr.)
WR	85	Lincoln Victor (Jr.)	81	Orion Peters (Fr.)
WR	**9**	**Renard Bell (Sr.)**		Zeriah Beason (So.)
WR	**88**	**De'Zhaun Stribling (So.)**	35	CJ Moore (Jr.)
LT	**52**	**Jarrett Kingston (Jr.)**	56	Jack Wilson (Jr.)
LG	57	Rodrick Tialavea (So.)	61	Quinn McCarthy (So.)
C	**77**	**Konner Gomness (So.)**	65	Brock Dieu (Fr.)
RG	66	Ma'ake Fifita (So.)	61	Christian Hilborn (Fr.)
RT		Grant Stephens (Sr.)	79	Fa'alili Fa'amoe (Fr.)
QB	1	Cameron Ward (So.)	10	Victor Gabalis (Fr.)
RB	25	Nakia Watson (Jr.)	23	Djouvensky Schlenbaker (Fr.)

DEFENSE (6)			Returning Starters in **BOLD**	
DE	**10**	**Ron Stone Jr. (Jr.)**	95	Andrew Edson (So.)
DT	**96**	**Antonio Pule (Sr.)**	54	Ahmir Crowder (Jr.)
DT	**48**	**Amir Mujahid (Sr.)**	15	Nusi Malani (So.)
DE	**80**	**Brennan Jackson (Jr.)**	20	Quinn Roff (So.)
LB	1	Daiyan Henley (Sr.)	9	Ben Wilson (Sr.)
LB	82	Travion Brown (Jr.)	51	Francisco Mauigoa (So.)
CB	6	Chau Smith-Wade (So.)	2	Chris Jackson (Jr.)
CB	**5**	**Derrick Langford Jr. (Sr.)**	23	Kaleb Ford-Dement (Sr.)
NB	**8**	**Armani Marsh (Sr.)**	4	Armauni Archie (So.)
S	13	Jordan Lee (Sr.)	32	Tanner Moku (So.)
S	37	Sam Lockett III (Jr.)	21	Adrian Shepherd (Fr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	49	Dean Janikowski (So.)	**KR**	9	Renard Bell (Sr.)
P	38	Nick Haberer (So.)	**PR**	9	Renard Bell (Sr.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	**ATT**	**COMP**	**YDS**	**TD**	**INT**
Jayden de Laura	359	227	2,798	23	9
Jarrett Guarantano	49	33	304	1	3
Victor Gabalis	**36**	**17**	**199**	**2**	**0**
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Max Borghi	160	880	5.5	12	
Deon McIntosh	111	532	4.8	3	
Nakia Watson	**36**	**114**	**3.2**	**0**	
Jayden de Laura	46	67	1.5	3	
Cammon Cooper	6	19	3.2	0	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Travell Harris	76	814	10.7	9	
Calvin Jackson Jr.	66	987	15.0	7	
De'Zhaun Stribling	**44**	**471**	**10.7**	**5**	
Donovan Ollie	**26**	**301**	**11.6**	**1**	
Lincoln Victor	**22**	**296**	**13.5**	**2**	

KICKING: **Dean Janikowski, 14-17 FGs, 84 pts.**
TACKLES: Jahad Woods, 109; Justus Rogers, 73
SACKS: **Ron Stone Jr., 5.0**
INTERCEPTIONS: **Armani Marsh, 3**

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE COUGARS

Opposing Coaches Size Up Washington State

"It's impressive what they were able to manage with everything that went on off the field. … Agree with him or not, Rolo [Nick Rolovich] was a huge program culture guy. He loved those guys, and they loved him back, and when he was fired they played their asses off. … How will the UIW QB [Cameron Ward] do? They're going to need him to play like a star right away. They're switching to 11 personnel, and they don't really have the tight ends to do that. The defense up front isn't good; the secondary is just OK. … The interim-to-head-coach situation is always a risk. There was so much emotion in what was going on last year, and sometimes that makes the administration stop thinking about the long term, especially in a situation where you're getting beat up publicly. … This is a program that needs to be prepared to deal with the downside of the portal on a consistent basis. Pullman is next to nothing, and if there's a standout lineman or receiver, WSU could easily lose them to a more glamorous place. You can't keep kids on a roster no matter what anymore, and so the entire philosophy of the [Mike] Leach era is dead. You're going to be recruiting all the time at a school like this. That's why it's more important to have a player culture than any scheme. … Jake Dickert won this job because of the kids on the roster. They'll determine whether or not he keeps it."

ARIZONA WILDCATS

National Forecast: 77 • Pac-12 South Prediction: 4 • Projected Record: 4-8, 3-6 Pac-12

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Jedd Fisch
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 1-11 (1 year)
CAREER RECORD: 2-12 (1+ years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Brennan Carroll
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Johnny Nansen
LOCATION: Tucson, AZ
STADIUM: Arizona Stadium (50,782)

KEY WILDCATS

JALEN HARRIS, DE Coming off his best season, with 47 tackles and four sacks, the sixth-year senior could become an elite pass rusher in college football.

CHRISTIAN ROLAND-WALLACE, CB In 25 career starts, Roland-Wallace has established himself as a big-play type, with 48 tackles as a sophomore.

JORDAN MORGAN, LT If he's healthy, Morgan is a difference-maker. He's 6'5", 328 pounds and mobile with 15 career starts in the book.

KEY LOSSES

STANLEY BERRYHILL III, WR On a bad team, Berryhill caught 83 passes and led the club in kickoff and punt returns. He chose to enter the NFL Draft rather than return.

DONOVAN LAIE, LT Over the last four seasons, Laie was the rock of the offensive line, starting 39 of 41 games.

ANTHONY PANDY, LB As a senior, Pandy hit his peak with 82 tackles to lead Arizona. He was the club's steadiest defensive performer.

RISING STAR

It took four-star true freshman wideout **TETAIROA MCMILLAN** about one week of spring practice to move into Arizona's starting lineup. He is 6'4", 186 pounds with length, speed and a high ceiling. He's a combo-type receiver who can go deep or over the middle.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Tetairoa McMillan, WR, Anaheim, CA	★★★★
2	Rayshon Luke, RB, Bellflower, CA	★★★★
3	Keyan Burnett, TE, Anaheim, CA	★★★★
4	Ephesians Prysock, CB, Mission Hills, CA	★★★★
5	Sterling Lane II, LB, Westlake Village, CA	★★★★
6	Kevin Green Jr., WR, Mission Hills, CA	★★★
7	Jonah Coleman, RB, Stockton, CA	★★★
8	Jonah Savaiinaea, OL, Honolulu, HI	★★★
9	Tyler Martin, LB, Cambridge, MA	★★★
10	Noah Fifita, QB, Anaheim, CA	★★★
11	Grayson Stovall, OL, Chandler, AZ	★★★
12	AJ Jones, WR, Ontario, CA	★★★
13	Isaiah Ward, Edge, Ontario, CA	★★★
14	Russell Davis II, Edge, Chandler, AZ	★★★
15	Jacob Manu, LB, Anaheim, CA	★★★
16	Tacario Davis, CB, Long Beach, CA	★★★
17	Jai-Ayviauynn Celestine, ATH, Miami, FL	★★★
18	Tyler Powell, TE, Phoenix, AZ	★★★
19	Isaiah Johnson, DL, Chandler, AZ	★★★
20	Ta'ita'i Uiagalelei, Edge, Santa Ana, CA	★★★
21	Jermaine Wiggins Jr., DL, Bridgton, ME	★★★
22	Jacob Reece, OL, Salt Lake City, UT	★★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite

Arizona has gone 1–23 dating back to the early 2019 season, and the Wildcats have the stats to back up that record.

They were 124th nationally in scoring last year. They were 101st in points allowed. Worse, they were 130th in turnovers forced.

Arizona has experienced such depths that boosters from rival Arizona State paid to erect a billboard on the freeway near Tucson with the words: "No Pity for the Kitty."

And yet second-year head coach Jedd Fisch recruited so fiercely and with such unexpected force that Arizona's Class of 2022 was ranked No. 1 in the Pac-12 by Rivals.com.

"I don't think anybody saw that coming," says Fisch, who is a new model of head coaching in Pac-12 football — a combination marketing CEO/motivational guru who spends considerable effort to establish an atmosphere of positivity rather than make it all about X's and O's.

Fisch's rebuilding project is more like a transplant. He had 41 new players on campus for spring practice and expects to add another 15 or so in summer camp. That would represent a roster turnover of almost 60 percent. And if there was anything Arizona needed, it was roster turnover. Arizona has the worst cumulative record in conference games since 2011 at 33–62.

To be fair, the Wildcats were a tough out in relatively competitive losses to BYU, UCLA, Washington, USC and Utah. But that simply showed that teams could play their "C-type" games and still beat the struggling Wildcats.

OFFENSE Arizona's most immediate need was to change the quarterback situation. Fisch started four quarterbacks last year, the most in any Arizona season ever.

It didn't take Fisch long to improve the QB room. Washington State transfer Jayden de Laura was the league's Offensive Freshman of the Year last season. Arizona then signed Noah Fifita of Anaheim Servite High School, a powerhouse in Southern California. De Laura and Fifita finished spring camp 1-2 in the QB chase.

De Laura plays with a sense of command and is mobile, able to make something out of nothing. Fifita is small (5'9", 184 pounds) but unusually quick, with exceptional arm strength. Jordan McCloud , a former starter at USF, appears to be the No. 3 quarterback.

The strength of Arizona's offense is its receiving group, which is among the youngest in the Pac-12. Elite recruit Tetairoa McMillan, who turned down Oregon to play for the Wildcats, is the most heavily recruited Arizona offensive player since Rob Gronkowski almost 15 years ago. Dorian Singer, who emerged late last season, is expected to join McMillan and UTEP transfer Jacob Cowing on the first unit.

In spring camp, freshman running back Jonah Coleman, who is compact, powerful and elusive, showed signs of being able to replace last year's starters, Drake Anderson and Michael Wiley.

The offensive line lost two longtime starters, but left tackle Jordan Morgan and right tackle Paiton Fears have

KYON BARRS

Mike Christy/Arizona Athletics

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	at San Diego State
Sept. 10	Mississippi State
Sept. 17	North Dakota State
Sept. 24	at California
Oct. 1	Colorado
Oct. 8	Oregon
Oct. 15	at Washington
Oct. 29	USC
Nov. 5	at Utah
Nov. 12	at UCLA
Nov. 19	Washington State
Nov. 25	Arizona State

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 1-11, 1-8 PAC-12

Sept. 4	vs. BYU #	L	16-24
Sept. 11	San Diego State	L	14-38
Sept. 18	Northern Arizona	L	19-21
Sept. 25	at Oregon	L	19-41
Oct. 9	UCLA	L	16-34
Oct. 16	at Colorado	L	0-34
Oct. 22	Washington	L	16-21
Oct. 30	at USC	L	34-41
Nov. 6	California	W	10-3
Nov. 13	Utah	L	29-38
Nov. 19	at Washington State	L	18-44
Nov. 27	at Arizona State	L	15-38

#Las Vegas

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	PAC-12	NATIONAL
Scoring	17.2 ppg	12	124
Rushing	129.6 ypg	8	96
Passing	226.3 ypg	3	69
Total	355.9 ypg	9	101
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**PAC-12**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	31.4 ppg	10	101
Rushing	180.9 ypg	10	99
Passing	190.1 ypg	2	15
Total	371.0 ypg	5	57
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**PAC-12**	**NATIONAL**
-17	-1.42	12	130

combined to start 39 games and are productive. Center Josh Baker and right guard Josh Donovan have extensive experience. Depth on the line will be an issue.

DEFENSE Arizona's most notable improvement last season was total defense. The Wildcats held opponents to 371 yards per game, the first time Arizona's defense had held opponents under 400 yards since 2010.

Defensive coordinator Don Brown, however, left to become head coach at UMass. Fisch replaced him with Johnny Nansen, who has spent the last 13 seasons coaching defense at USC, UCLA and Washington. Unlike the blitz-happy Brown, Nansen is more of a conventional coach, reading and reacting.

The strength of the entire UA team is its secondary. Cornerbacks Christian Roland-Wallace and Treydan Stukes and safeties Christian Young and Jaxen Turner have combined for more than 65 career starts.

Among Arizona's minimal defensive losses, only linebacker Anthony Pandy will be hard to replace. Junior defensive end Jalen Harris could be an All-Pac-12 player. Linemen Kyon Barrs and JB Brown were solid in 2021.

The linebacking unit will be led by USC transfer Hunter Echols, who has four years of experience. Jerry Roberts, who broke his leg late last season, was a useful player after transferring from Bowling Green.

SPECIALISTS The Wildcats have a promising kicking twosome: Sophomore Kyle Ostendorp was the All-Pac-12 punter last season, averaging 49.2 yards per punt; placekicker Tyler Loop won the job midway through last season, making all 12 of his field-goal attempts. The punt and kickoff return situation is totally fluid, requiring new contributors to step up.

FINAL ANALYSIS At a time Arizona could use a softie or two on its non-conference schedule, the Wildcats face perhaps their most difficult non-league schedule in 25 years. They open at San Diego State, which was 12–2 a year ago and routed Arizona 38–14 in Tucson. Arizona then plays host to Mike Leach and Mississippi State and follows that by meeting defending FCS champion North Dakota State in Tucson. The Bison have won nine national titles since 2011.

Arizona has much better personnel than it had in 2021, especially with de Laura at quarterback and one of the best secondaries the school has had in the last decade. This year, Arizona needs to win a few close games rather than just hanging tight and claiming them as moral victories.

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	24.1	130
Defense	26.9	20
Margin	-2.8	103
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	39.2%	106
Defense	43.3%	80
Margin	-4.1%	101
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	5.0	116
Defense	6.1	99
Margin	-1.1	109
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	3.0	128
Defense	4.3	89
Margin	-1.3	123
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	-2.7	103
Actual	-17	130
Margin	-14.3	130

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

3.09

Arizona scored just 3.09 points per quality possession, ranking 129th nationally. On 117 drives, the Wildcats generated just 50 quality possessions and averaged barely a field goal per possession.

0.203

Arizona's passing offense struggled all season. The Wildcats averaged -0.034 EPA/play on the year, but their passing attack was particularly troubling: At 0.203 EPA/pass, the Wildcats ranked 112th in the FBS.

0.9

With a starting field position of the 24.1-yard line, Arizona averaged starting 0.9 yards worse than a touchdown.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

WR	4	Tetairoa McMillan (Fr.)	10	Jamarye Joiner (So.)
WR	5	Dorian Singer (Fr.)	18	Ma'jon Wright (Fr.)
WR	2	Jacob Cowing (So.)	12	Kevin Green Jr. (Fr.)
LT	**77**	**Jordan Morgan (So.)**	71	Jonah Savaiinaea (Fr.)
LG	73	Woody Jean (Fr.)	79	Davis DiVall (Fr.)
C	**75**	**Josh Baker (Fr.)**	55	JT Hand (Fr.)
RG	**56**	**Josh Donovan (Jr.)**	58	Sam Langi (Jr.)
RT	**74**	**Paiton Fears (Jr.)**	57	Shontrail Key (Fr.)
TE	**88**	**Alex Lines (Fr.)**	89	Keyan Burnett (Fr.)
QB	7	Jayden de Laura (So.)	11	Noah Fifita (Fr.)
RB	24	Jonah Coleman (Fr.)	6	Michael Wiley (So.)

DEFENSE (8)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	**1**	**Jalen Harris (Jr.)**	6	Jason Harris (Fr.)
DT	98	Tiaoalii Savea (Fr.)	94	Dion Wilson Jr. (Fr.)
DT	**92**	**Kyon Barrs (So.)**	95	Paris Shand (Fr.)
DE	12	JB Brown (Sr.)	97	Jermaine Wiggins Jr. (Fr.)
OLB	31	Hunter Echols (Sr.)	40	Ammon Allen (Fr.)
MLB	**48**	**Jerry Roberts (Jr.)**	10	Anthony Solomon (Jr.)
OLB	53	Malik Reed (Fr.)	44	Jeremy Mercier (Jr.)
CB	**4**	**C. Roland-Wallace (So.)**	7	Ephesians Prysock (Fr.)
CB	20	Treydan Stukes (Fr.)	**2**	**Isaiah Rutherford (So.)**
SS	**5**	**Christian Young (Jr.)**	9	Gunner Maldonado (Fr.)
FS	**21**	**Jaxen Turner (So.)**	**3**	**Jaydin Young (Fr.)**

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	33	Tyler Loop (Fr.)	KR	10	Jamarye Joiner (So.)
P	19	Kyle Ostendorp (So.)	PR	6	Michael Wiley (So.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	**ATT**	**COMP**	**YDS**	**TD**	**INT**
Will Plummer	**267**	**155**	**1,610**	**6**	**9**
Gunner Cruz	**93**	**61**	**536**	**2**	**3**
Jordan McCloud	**73**	**48**	**481**	**2**	**5**
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Drake Anderson	**87**	**384**	**4.4**	**1**	
Michael Wiley	**91**	**302**	**3.3**	**2**	
Jalen John	**62**	**250**	**4.0**	**0**	
Stevie Rocker Jr.	**31**	**153**	**4.9**	**0**	
Will Plummer	**60**	**138**	**2.3**	**2**	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Stanley Berryhill III	83	744	9.0	1	
BJ Casteel	33	326	9.9	1	
Michael Wiley	**33**	**297**	**9.0**	**4**	
Boobie Curry	21	233	11.1	3	
Dorian Singer	**18**	**301**	**16.7**	**0**	

KICKING: **Tyler Loop, 12-12 FGs, 48 pts.**
TACKLES: Anthony Pandy, 82; **Christian Young, 68**
SACKS: **Kyon Barrs, 5.0**
INTERCEPTIONS: 4 players tied with 1

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE WILDCATS

Opposing Coaches Size Up Arizona

"This is the program that's going to slowly build and stay out of the spotlight, but they could be one of those schools that benefits from the league being down and major schools being in transition. … They're doing a good job in recruiting, but some of that might be overblown when you consider what an average Pac-12 class actually means right now. … But compared to where [Kevin] Sumlin left it, they've definitely upgraded the roster, and you can clearly see what they want to do, even in the places where they can't do it yet because of the personnel. … Jedd [Fisch] is such a seasoned veteran in the industry; he's going to thrive in this phase where he can manage the boosters and the players and play the game. … They've got the Wazzu QB [Jayden de Laura], and he'll bring a lot of toughness in immediately. He's a competitive, physical player. … They're starting to build out a name, image and likeness plan, and if there's something different or unique there, that could really help them. … Overall, it's gonna be another season of taking their lumps. This was and is a total from-scratch rebuild with less assets than most Pac-12 schools, but you'd still rather be here than at the other Arizona school. There's no pressure, and they have no attention on them. They could be bowling in two years."

ARIZONA STATE SUN DEVILS

National Forecast: 80 • Pac-12 South Prediction: 5 • Projected Record: 5-7, 3-6 Pac-12

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Herm Edwards
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 25-18 (4 years)
CAREER RECORD: 25-18 (4 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Glenn Thomas
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Donnie Henderson
LOCATION: Tempe, AZ
STADIUM: Sun Devil Stadium (56,634)

KEY SUN DEVILS

MERLIN ROBERTSON, SLB He'll anchor the Sun Devils' 4-3 defense from his Sam linebacker position. Showed his playmaking skills by grabbing three interceptions on the season and returning one for a clinching TD vs. Washington.

LADARIUS HENDERSON, OT With three offensive line starters departing, he'll be counted on to anchor the unit. Has improved dramatically since being thrown into the fire as a freshman starter at left tackle on the road at Michigan State in 2019.

KYLE SOELLE, MLB ASU's leading tackler by a wide margin last season with 88 stops, including eight for a loss, Soelle enters his sixth year of college football as a third-year captain. He's viewed as the biggest leadership voice on the defense.

KEY LOSSES

RACHAAD WHITE, RB Unquestionably ASU's top offensive performer last season, White was a 1,000-yard rusher who also finished second in receptions and receiving yards and accounted for more than one-third of the team's yards from scrimmage.

JAYDEN DANIELS, QB Even though he had a statistically underwhelming season that fell far short of expectations, Daniels was extremely valuable at moving the chains with his improvisation and quarterbacked an eight-win team before transferring to LSU.

DJ DAVIDSON, NT A second-team all-conference performer, Davidson anchored ASU's impressive defensive front as a gap-controlling nose tackle who allowed everyone else around him to thrive and also made a surprising number of rangy plays for a 325-pounder.

RISING STAR

A legacy Sun Devil whose father, Paul Glass, played defensive line 20 years ago, **ISAIA GLASS** has a good chance to start at left tackle after serving as the team's top backup as a true freshman last season. He appears destined to be one of the team's most important offensive players over the next few years.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Tevin White, RB, Stafford, VA	★★★★
2	Jacob Newell, TE, Springfield, OR	★★★
3	Bennett Meredith, QB, Hoover, AL	★★★
4	Dylan Hall, DL, Lancaster, CA*	★★★
5	Blazen Lono-Wong, Edge, Kailua, HI	★★★
6	Robby Harrison, DL, Greenwood, SC	★★★
7	Jalil Rivera-Harvey, DL, Cedar Hill, TX*	★★★
8	Bryce Pierre, TE, Rancho Cucamonga, CA	★★★
9	Carter Brown, K, Pearland, TX	★★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite *junior college transfer

Arizona State's gradual three-year ascent under Herm Edwards hit sudden turbulence last summer when the start of an NCAA investigation into alleged recruiting improprieties jostled the program throughout an underwhelming 8–5 season.

In the months that followed, defensive coordinator Antonio Pierce, offensive coordinator Zak Hill and tight ends coach Adam Breneman resigned, while wide receivers coach Prentice Gill and secondary coach Chris Hawkins were fired. Then, a stunning 17 players entered the transfer portal, including several of the team's best players. The Sun Devils have a very different-looking team and a half-rebuilt staff that is tasked with replacing most of its best players, including at quarterback following Jayden Daniels's transfer to LSU. To cope, ASU added more Division I transfers than ever, with newcomers expected to start at several positions.

OFFENSE After two seasons in the same role at UNLV, Glenn Thomas has taken over as offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach. The Sun Devils will continue to deploy a multiple offense, but one that has a bit more of a pro-style feel with an increased amount of huddling and drop-back play-action passing. Thomas will have to find a replacement for Daniels, who left following a disappointing season. A potential answer came in early May with a commitment from Florida transfer Emory Jones. In 13 games with the Gators last year, Jones accounted for over 3,000 total yards, and his mobility is an asset for a rebuilding offensive line.

Making matters worse, ASU has to replace its two leading running backs (including star Rachaad White), its top tight end and three starting offensive linemen.

Several important newcomers have transferred in: running back Xazavian Valladay from Wyoming, where he was the most productive rusher in the Mountain West over the previous three seasons; wide receiver Cam Johnson from Vanderbilt; tight end Messiah Swinson from Missouri; and offensive linemen Des Holmes (Penn State), Chris Martinez (San Diego State), Emmit Bohle (Division II Northern State), and Joey Ramos (Iowa State).

While they should be good at running back between Valladay and Daniyel Ngata, and tight end between Swinson and Jalin Conyers, offensive line is a question after Ben Scott shifted from right tackle to center to replace all-league pick Dohnovan West. In addition, Bohle is battling youngster Isaia Glass at left tackle following the departure of all-league selection Kellen Diesch.

Wide receiver is an even bigger concern, with no spring newcomers at a position of need. Ricky Pearsall entered the transfer portal after spring ball despite leading the team in every major receiving category last season. Elijhah Badger is capable of offering significantly more production than last season, and he may need to.

DEFENSE Donnie Henderson has been promoted from interim secondary coach to coordinator to replace Pierce, who is now coaching linebackers with the Las Vegas Raiders. Henderson has nearly four decades of coaching

MERLIN ROBERTSON

Peter Brouillet

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	Northern Arizona
Sept. 10	at Oklahoma State
Sept. 17	Eastern Michigan
Sept. 24	Utah
Oct. 1	at USC
Oct. 8	Washington
Oct. 22	at Stanford
Oct. 29	at Colorado
Nov. 5	UCLA
Nov. 12	at Washington State
Nov. 19	Oregon State
Nov. 25	at Arizona

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 8-5, 6-3 PAC-12

Sept. 2	Southern Utah	W	41-14
Sept. 11	UNLV	W	41-10
Sept. 18	at BYU	L	17-27
Sept. 25	Colorado	W	35-13
Oct. 2	at UCLA	W	42-23
Oct. 8	Stanford	W	28-10
Oct. 16	at Utah	L	21-35
Oct. 30	Washington State	L	21-34
Nov. 6	USC	W	31-16
Nov. 13	at Washington	W	35-30
Nov. 20	at Oregon State	L	10-24
Nov. 27	Arizona	W	38-15
Dec. 30	vs. Wisconsin #	L	13-20

#Las Vegas Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	PAC-12	NATIONAL
Scoring	28.4 ppg	6	67
Rushing	191.4 ypg	5	35
Passing	194.6 ypg	11	99
Total	386.0 ypg	6	75

DEFENSE	PER GAME	PAC-12	NATIONAL
Scoring	20.8 ppg	1	22
Rushing	131.2 ypg	3	33
Passing	194.8 ypg	3	20
Total	326.0 ypg	1	13

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	PAC-12	NATIONAL
0	0.00	8	70

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	29.4	54
Defense	27.6	29
Margin	+1.8	36
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	49.3%	12
Defense	39.6%	39
Margin	+9.7%	7
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	6.4	34
Defense	5.1	19
Margin	+1.3	14
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.4	46
Defense	3.8	40
Margin	+0.6	36
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	3.4	21
Actual	-1	71
Margin	-4.4	106

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

0.214

Arizona State averaged 0.214 EPA/rush, third nationally, even as it ran 6.4 percent more than the average team. The Sun Devils were successful on 42.3 percent of all rushes, third in the FBS.

44.7%

The Sun Devils converted 44.7 percent of their third downs (26th nationally), despite an average distance of 7.35 yards to go (48th longest in the FBS).

3.94

Arizona State's defense allowed quality possessions on 47.7 percent of drives but succeeded in limiting damage by holding opponents to just 3.94 points per quality possession, 17th in the FBS.

under his belt, including as secondary coach for ASU's 1996 Rose Bowl team.

The front seven is an obvious team strength, led by sixth-year senior linebackers Kyle Soelle and Merlin Robertson, although Freshman All-American Eric Gentry left the team following spring ball as a high-profile transfer candidate.

Defensive line coach Robert Rodriguez has done an excellent job with his group, though his top 3-technique tackle, star Jermayne Lole, entered the transfer portal. Nose tackle Nesta Jade Silvera, a Miami (Fla.) transfer, will help offset the loss of starter DJ Davidson, while BJ Green, who led the team in sacks last season, will be elevated into a more prominent role at the 3-technique position.

At end, sixth-year senior Travez Moore started at the outset of last season over the now-departed Tyler Johnson — ASU's lone first-team All-Pac-12 pick — before he suffered a season-ending knee injury in September. But Moore may have a tough time earning a starting job after Michael Matus and Anthonie Cooper played extremely well last season and young backups Joe Moore and Gharin Stansbury showed great promise.

Replacing four starters in the secondary is ASU's biggest defensive liability. Safety appears stronger than cornerback after Hawaii transfer Khoury Bethley and Samford transfer Chris Edmonds were effective in spring ball, and Kejuan Markham was solid last season following an injury to starter Evan Fields.

With Chase Lucas and Jack Jones no longer in Tempe, Timarcus Davis and other returners must improve at cornerback, where former Colorado corner Tarik Luckett was added from the junior college ranks.

SPECIALISTS Punter Eddie Czaplicki was excellent as a freshman and has increased his hang time and field-flipping reliability. DJ Taylor will try to make amends for a disappointing season as a returner after breaking out in 2020. Placekicking could be a concern with up to three players expected to compete for the job.

FINAL ANALYSIS The Sun Devils will struggle to match their eight-win total from 2021. With so much to replace, they also have a tougher schedule that includes a game at Oklahoma State and a brutal opening to the Pac-12 slate — the Sun Devils host Utah before traveling to USC. Just as important are the distractions brought on by the NCAA investigation, which could contribute to a coaching change by year's end.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (2)

WR	21	Elijhah Badger (So.)	82	Andre Johnson (Jr.)
WR	20	Giovanni Sanders (Sr.)		Cam Johnson (Sr.)
WR	22	Bryan Thompson (Sr.)	17	Chad Johnson Jr. (So.)
LT	73	Isaia Glass (So.)	70	Emmit Bohle (Sr.)
LG	**77**	**LaDarius Henderson (Sr.)**	76	Spencer Lovell (Sr.)
C	**66**	**Ben Scott (Jr.)**		Joey Ramos (Sr.)
RG	53	Chris Martinez (Sr.)	76	Spencer Lovell (Sr.)
RT	75	Des Holmes (Sr.)		Joey Ramos (Sr.)
TE	80	Messiah Swinson (Sr.)	12	Jalin Conyers (So.)
QB		Emory Jones (Jr.)	16	Trenton Bourguet (Jr.)
RB	1	Xazavian Valladay (Sr.)	4	Daniyel Ngata (So.)

DEFENSE (3)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	**91**	**Michael Matus (Sr.)**	49	Travez Moore (Sr.)
NT	4	Nesta Jade Silvera (Sr.)	44	Tautala Pesefea Jr. (Sr.)
DT	35	B.J. Green II (So.)	55	Omarr Norman-Lott (So.)
DE	96	Anthonie Cooper (Jr.)	58	Joe Moore (So.)
SLB	**8**	**Merlin Robertson (Sr.)**	28	Will Shaffer (So.)
MLB	**34**	**Kyle Soelle (Sr.)**	22	Caleb McCullough (So.)
WLB	18	Connor Soelle (Jr.)	23	Rodney Groce (So.)
CB	7	Timarcus Davis (Sr.)	3	Isaiah Johnson (Fr.)
CB		Tarik Luckett (Jr.)	13	Keon Markham (Jr.)
NB	1	Jordan Clark (Jr.)	19	Willie Harts (Jr.)
S	15	Khoury Bethley (Sr.)	12	Kejuan Markham (Sr.)
S	16	Chris Edmonds (Sr.)	12	Kejuan Markham (Sr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K		Carter Brown (Fr.)	**KR**	29	DJ Taylor (So.)
P	38	Eddie Czaplicki (So.)	**PR**	29	DJ Taylor (So.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	**ATT**	**COMP**	**YDS**	**TD**	**INT**
Jayden Daniels	301	197	2,380	10	10
Trenton Bourguet	**10**	**7**	**91**	**1**	**0**
Ricky Pearsall	2	2	59	1	0
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Rachaad White	182	1,006	5.5	15	
Jayden Daniels	137	685	5.0	6	
DeaMonte Trayanum	78	401	5.1	6	
Daniyel Ngata	**56**	**309**	**5.5**	**4**	
Ricky Pearsall	6	44	7.3	1	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Ricky Pearsall	48	580	12.1	4	
Rachaad White	43	456	10.6	1	
LV Bunkley-Shelton	33	418	12.7	2	
Curtis Hodges	20	373	18.7	2	
Bryan Thompson	**13**	**130**	**10.0**	**0**	

KICKING: Cristian Zendejas, 8-11 FGs, 64 pts.
TACKLES: **Kyle Soelle, 88;** Darien Butler, 68
SACKS: **B.J. Green II, 5.0**
INTERCEPTIONS: 3 players tied with 3

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE SUN DEVILS

Opposing Coaches Size Up Arizona State

"This is the biggest dumpster fire in college football. It is absolutely mind blowing that Herm [Edwards] is still employed, at least in the mind of the college coaching community. Everyone knows it's a ticking time bomb, but no one knows if it's going off in a month or a year from now. They look like a mid-level SEC program when they get off the bus, and you start to see what they've been recruiting. Then you finish the game, and it's like playing a MWC team. They're wildly inconsistent, they turn the ball over, they make mental errors, it's all stuff that screams no stability. We've played them when they're locked in and physical, and we've played them when they're just not interested in being there. … The Herm plan isn't terrible: Bring in the CEO head coach to work externally, and let talented assistants coach. But they didn't follow any of the rules. That model has to be adjusted from the NFL to college because there's way more ways to screw up here. … It's embarrassing he still has a job when some of those assistants are unemployed and bearing the brunt of things he directed. … This program has the best chance of a total implosion midseason because there's no consistency anywhere: not in the coaches, the head coach, or the roster. It's a waste. This program is always good on paper but fails to every really win consistently, and this another example of it."

COLORADO BUFFALOES

National Forecast: 92 • Pac-12 South Prediction: 6 • Projected Record: 3-9, 2-7 Pac-12

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Karl Dorrell
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 8-10 (2 years)
CAREER RECORD: 43-37 (7 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mike Sanford Jr.
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Chris Wilson
LOCATION: Boulder, CO
STADIUM: Folsom Field (50,183)

KEY BUFFALOES

BRADY RUSSELL, TE Former walk-on is a fourth-year starter, one of the Pac-12's better tight ends and a key weapon in the passing game.

JALEN SAMI, DT A rock in the middle of the Buffs' deep and talented line, he's one of the better run-stuffers in the Pac-12.

GUY THOMAS, DE One of CU's most disruptive and physical defenders, he was playing well before a foot injury cut his 2021 season short.

KEY LOSSES

JAREK BROUSSARD, RB Pac-12 Offensive Player of the Year in 2020 and CU's leading rusher the past two years transferred to Michigan State.

CHRISTIAN GONZALEZ, CB Started all 18 games in his two years in Boulder but transferred to Oregon in the offseason.

NATE LANDMAN, ILB One of the top tacklers in program history, racking up 347 tackles and 42 TFLs from 2017-21.

RISING STAR

Cornerback **NIKKO REED** played a reserve role as a true freshman and has shown potential to be a standout in coverage. He could be CU's top corner this season. He took his first career kickoff back 100 yards for a TD in the 2021 finale at Utah.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Dylan Dixson, S, Pearland, TX	★★★
2	Aubrey Smith, LB, Buford, GA	★★★
3	Anthony Hankerson, RB, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	★★★
4	Owen McCown, QB, Rusk, TX	★★★
5	Eoghan Kerry, LB, Santa Ana, CA	★★★
6	Shakaun Bowser, LB, Queen Creek, AZ	★★★
7	Jordyn Tyson, WR, Allen, TX	★★★
8	Grant Page, ATH, Boulder, CO	★★★
9	Victor Venn, RB, Buford, GA	★★★
10	Jason Oliver, CB, Bakersfield, CA	★★★
11	Joshua Wiggins, CB, Spring, TX	★★★
12	Zach Courtney, TE, Post, TX	★★★
13	Kaden Ludwick, LB, Clackamas, OR	★★★
14	Carter Edwards, OT, Hattiesburg, MS	★★★
15	Simeon Harris, CB, Benicia, CA	★★★
16	Aaron Austin, DL, Ft. Worth, TX	★★★
17	Keyshon Mills, CB, Little Elm, TX	★★★
18	Travis Gray, OT, Aurora, CO	★★★
19	Van Wells, OL, Houston, TX	★★★
20	Chase Sowell, WR, Humble, TX	★★★
21	Xavier Smith, S, Fairburn, GA	★★★
22	Jeremy Mack Jr., S, Scooba, MS*	★★★
23	Alex Harkey, OT, Buda, TX*	★★★
24	Oakie Salave'a, ATH, Pago Pago, AS	★★★
25	Isaac Hurtado, LB, Cypress, CA	★★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite

*junior college transfer

Last winter, Colorado had 22 players transfer out of the program, including six starters, and head coach Karl Dorrell replaced six of 10 full-time coaches. On the heels of a disappointing season, the tumultuous offseason painted a negative picture of the program, but Dorrell believes it was needed for the Buffaloes to make progress.

"I do feel like this team is growing fast," Dorrell said in the spring. "They're getting better at a faster rate than where it's been the last couple of years. I already feel we're ahead of where we were a year ago.

"There's no question there's a stronger commitment within the team. They're working hard. They're doing what we've asked of them. The team is creating a strong bond. I think a lot of those things were missing in other years. There's a lot of room for progress and fast progress when we have a team that's on the same page."

OFFENSE To fix an offense that was one of the worst in the country, Dorrell started by replacing 80 percent of his assistants on that side of the ball. Former Minnesota offensive coordinator Mike Sanford Jr. is now steering the ship. He and others brought in new energy and genuine joy for working with each other and with the players. They have also injected new ideas, with the hope of finding balance and versatility.

"There's a pretty defined system that's in place, and I think that's the biggest thing that (fans) will see," Dorrell says. "They'll see that we'll have answers off of most things that we do. Hopefully more efficiency where we're able to churn out yards (on the ground) when we need to churn them out and then throw it well when we need to throw it."

At quarterback, Brendon Lewis started all 12 games and struggled at times, although he threw only three interceptions on the season. A talented dual threat, he showed improvement in the offseason with his grasp of the offense and decision-making. Lewis will battle for his job, though, with JT Shrout, a former Tennessee transfer with a big arm who missed last season with a knee injury.

Transfer R.J. Sneed II, who caught 133 career passes at Baylor, leads a revamped crew at receiver. The rest of the group has a combined 78 career catches, but there is a lot of talent. Montana Lemonious-Craig has star potential and is a reliable target. Big, speedy Daniel Arias had his best spring. Tight end Brady Russell is an important weapon as well, and the Buffs have a collection of young talent behind him, starting with former four-star recruit Erik Olsen.

Running back is not deep, but Alex Fontenot led the Buffs in rushing in 2019, and Ramon Jefferson was an FCS All-American at Sam Houston last season. Deion Smith and Jayle Stacks both made significant strides in the spring and could factor in as well.

The line had a rough 2021 but got a jolt of confidence from new position coach Kyle DeVan. Guard Casey Roddick and tackles Frank Fillip and Jake Wiley are returning starters. Former Iowa backup Noah Fenske could step

ALEX FONTENOT

Tim Clark

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	TCU
Sept. 10	at Air Force
Sept. 17	at Minnesota
Sept. 24	UCLA
Oct. 1	at Arizona
Oct. 15	California
Oct. 22	at Oregon State
Oct. 29	Arizona State
Nov. 5	Oregon
Nov. 11	at USC
Nov. 19	at Washington
Nov. 26	Utah

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 4-8, 3-6 PAC-12

Sept. 3	Northern Colorado	W	35-7
Sept. 11	vs. Texas A&M #	L	7-10
Sept. 18	Minnesota	L	0-30
Sept. 25	at Arizona State	L	13-35
Oct. 2	USC	L	14-37
Oct. 16	Arizona	W	34-0
Oct. 23	at California	L	3-26
Oct. 30	at Oregon	L	29-52
Nov. 6	Oregon State (ot)	W	37-34
Nov. 13	at UCLA	L	20-44
Nov. 20	Washington	W	20-17
Nov. 26	at Utah	L	13-28

#Denver

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	PAC-12	NATIONAL
Scoring	18.8 ppg	11	121
Rushing	126.2 ypg	9	98
Passing	131.2 ypg	12	126
Total	257.4 ypg	12	129

DEFENSE	PER GAME	PAC-12	NATIONAL
Scoring	26.7 ppg	7	73
Rushing	178.6 ypg	9	96
Passing	242.3 ypg	10	90
Total	420.9 ypg	11	98

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	PAC-12	NATIONAL
+6	+0.50	5	29

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	28.8	67
Defense	29.7	85
Margin	-0.9	79
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	35.3%	125
Defense	45.6%	103
Margin	-10.3%	121
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	4.5	125
Defense	6.2	103
Margin	-1.7	121
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.1	75
Defense	4.0	53
Margin	+0.1	75
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	2.4	38
Actual	6	27
Margin	+3.6	33

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

23

Colorado ran 529 plays in 2021, and only 23 of them went for 20-plus yards, ranking 129th in the nation. The Buffaloes' offense averaged -0.122 EPA/play, ranking 124th in explosiveness.

4.34

The Buffaloes' defense held their opponents to 4.34 points per quality possession, good enough for 59th in the FBS.

31.7%

Only 31.7 percent of Colorado's drives resulted in a quality possession (128th in the country). Colorado averaged 3.98 points per quality possession, ranking in the bottom 20 of the FBS.

in at center, while transfer Tommy Brown (Alabama) is expected to solidify the line at guard or tackle.

DEFENSE Between graduation and the transfer portal, the Buffs lost six of their best players on defense, so they'll be young, especially on the back end.

Up front, however, the Buffs are experienced and talented, and that led to a shift from a 3-4 base to a 4-3. "We've got a good group of guys up front, a veteran group of guys up front, so that was the best move for us moving forward," defensive coordinator Chris Wilson says. Tackles Jalen Sami, Na'im Rodman and Janaz Jordan all have starting experience. On the edge, Terrance Lang and Guy Thomas are two of CU's best players, and there is a rising young group behind them, including Alvin Williams and Devin Grant.

Josh Chandler-Semedo, who led West Virginia in tackles last year, was a late and crucial addition through the transfer portal and could step right in as a starter at middle linebacker. Seniors Robert Barnes and Quinn Perry are leaders at linebacker with starting experience, but the Buffs need unproven youth to step up. Marvin Ham II, Isaac Hurtado, Eoghan Kerry and Mister Williams showed some potential in the spring.

Both starting corners from last year are playing elsewhere in the Pac-12, but the Buffs like the young talent. True sophomores Nikko Reed and Kaylin Moore and true freshman Joshua Wiggins have flashed their cover skills and confidence. Junior Nigel Bethel Jr. was having a good season in 2021 before an injury sidelined him.

Senior Isaiah Lewis is a third-year starter at safety, and he'll be tasked with not only playing well, but also bringing along his young teammates. Sophomores Tyrin Taylor and Trevor Woods have a lot of talent but haven't proven themselves as starters.

SPECIALISTS Sophomore Cole Becker missed his first three field-goal attempts but went 14-for-17 the rest of the way and has one of the strongest legs in the Pac-12. True freshman Ashton Logan takes over at punter, and the Buffs like his potential.

FINAL ANALYSIS Dorrell is in his third year in Boulder, but this is still a rebuilding program. Outside expectations are low, but with a rebuilt staff and young talent, there is a quiet confidence.

Dorrell is ready for the challenge. "I do believe by the time we line up and play, we'll have a good 22 — first and second team — on both sides of the ball that can move and do some good things for us," he says.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	**6**	**Daniel Arias (Sr.)**	13	Maurice Bell (Sr.)
WR	2	R.J. Sneed II (Sr.)	80	Ty Robinson (So.)
WR	1	M. Lemonious-Craig (So.)	3	Chase Penry (So.)
LT	**60**	**Jake Wiley (So.)**	72	Travis Gray (Fr.)
LG	75	Tommy Brown (Sr.)	56	Jackson Anderson (Fr.)
C	53	Noah Fenske (So.)	64	Austin Johnson (So.)
RG	**70**	**Casey Roddick (Jr.)**		Alex Harkey (So.)
RT	**76**	**Frank Fillip (Jr.)**	69	G. Christian-Lichtenhan (So.)
TE	**38**	**Brady Russell (Sr.)**	87	Erik Olsen (Fr.)
QB	**12**	**Brendon Lewis (So.)**	5	JT Shrout (Jr.)
RB	8	Alex Fontenot (Sr.)		Ramon Jefferson (Sr.)

DEFENSE (4)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	**54**	**Terrance Lang (Sr.)**	90	Chance Main (Sr.)
DT	**99**	**Jalen Sami (Jr.)**	94	Janaz Jordan (Sr.)
DT	91	Na'im Rodman (Jr.)	13	Justin Jackson (Sr.)
DE	1	Guy Thomas (Sr.)	58	Alvin Williams (So.)
SLB	**12**	**Quinn Perry (Sr.)**	7	Marvin Ham II (So.)
MLB		J. Chandler-Semedo (Sr.)	29	Isaac Hurtado (So.)
WLB	20	Robert Barnes (Sr.)	10	Eoghan Kerry (Fr.)
CB	2	Nikko Reed (So.)	27	Nigel Bethel Jr. (Jr.)
CB	0	Kaylin Moore (So.)	21	Joshua Wiggins (Fr.)
SS	**23**	**Isaiah Lewis (Sr.)**	5	Tyrin Taylor (So.)
FS	43	Trevor Woods (So.)		Dylan Dixson (Fr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	36	Cole Becker (So.)	**KR**	2	Nikko Reed (So.)
P	88	Ashton Logan (Fr.)	**PR**	3	Chase Penry (So.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	**ATT**	**COMP**	**YDS**	**TD**	**INT**
Brendon Lewis	**257**	**149**	**1,540**	**10**	**3**
Drew Carter	**12**	**5**	**35**	**0**	**0**
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Jarek Broussard	142	661	4.7	2	
Alex Fontenot	**96**	**326**	**3.4**	**5**	
Deion Smith	**53**	**192**	**3.6**	**2**	
Brendon Lewis	**98**	**188**	**1.9**	**2**	
Ashaad Clayton	20	84	4.2	1	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Brady Russell	**25**	**307**	**12.3**	**0**	
Brenden Rice	21	299	14.2	3	
Daniel Arias	**19**	**237**	**12.5**	**1**	
Dimitri Stanley	15	130	8.7	1	
Jarek Broussard	13	80	6.2	0	

KICKING: **Cole Becker, 14-20 FGs, 67 pts.**
TACKLES: **Isaiah Lewis, 68**; Quinn Perry, 67
SACKS: Carson Wells, 5.5
INTERCEPTIONS: Mark Perry, 3

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE BUFFALOES

Opposing Coaches Size Up Colorado

It will be interesting to see how they look this year. What was the real [Karl] Dorrell product? The quick wins in the pandemic season, or what came after? They're definitely still transitioning, and some of that is because of the time of year [Mel] Tucker left and the inability to hire out from a full pool of assistants, but the trick with Colorado is that from the outside, the expectations are unclear. Coaches talk in this league, and there's a rep out that they're not interested in pressing to be great again, that they're just going to be focused on academics. … They have a lot of unknowns with their personnel, but they're trying to recruit more aggressively and sell the campus, sell the culture. It's a great place to recruit to. … They have a good offensive line, better than you think, and they have some really good offensive coaches now. The issues are going to be if the portal departures were because of good new culture or bad new culture. Anytime you see that movement, you wonder who's at fault there. … Since they've joined the league, they've underperformed relative to their potential, if you believe in Colorado as a brand, because they could recruit and develop like a Utah if they had the right guys in there. … Dorrell is a veteran coach. There's a chance he can play this right and let his guys recruit their asses off and surprise some people in a year or two. Until then, you look at this program and think about what could be."

UCLA BRUINS

National Forecast: 39 • Pac-12 South Prediction: 3 • Projected Record: 8-4, 5-4 Pac-12

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Chip Kelly
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 18-25 (4 years)
CAREER RECORD: 64-32 (8 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Justin Frye
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Bill McGovern
LOCATION: Los Angeles, CA
STADIUM: Rose Bowl (91,136)

KEY BRUINS

DORIAN THOMPSON-ROBINSON, QB Veteran signal-caller (35 starts) led the Pac-12 in passing efficiency, total offense and touchdowns (30 passing and rushing) last season. He's arguably the top returning quarterback in the Pac-12 this season.

ZACH CHARBONNET, RB Michigan transfer posted seven 100-plus-yard rushing games in 2021 while also contributing as a pass-catcher out of the backfield. His position coach, former Bruin great DeShaun Foster, feels that he's a pro running back in waiting.

STEPHAN BLAYLOCK, SS The Bruins' leading returning tackler with 53 stops in 2021, Blaylock is consistently all over the field. He's also consistently in the lineup, having started 31 consecutive games.

KEY LOSSES

GREG DULCICH, TE A first-team All-Pac-12 selection, Dulcich was a remarkable vertical threat for his position, averaging 17.3 yards per catch, and also a reliable presence over the middle.

OTITO OGBONNIA, DT The most consistent defensive lineman for the Bruins over the course of his career, he regularly applied pressure in the opposing backfield.

QWUANTREZZ KNIGHT, NB The captain of the defense was a do-everything dynamo for the Bruins last season, leading the team in tackles (66) and tackles for a loss (8.5). He was named second-team all-conference.

RISING STAR

DEVIN KIRKWOOD is a long, tall (6'3") cornerback with deceptive speed who impressed in limited action as a true freshman and looks set to assume the starting role as a lockdown option on the outside.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Kamari Ramsey, S, Chatsworth, CA	★★★★
2	Jack Pedersen, TE, Murrieta, CA	★★★★
3	Jadyn Marshall, WR, Stockton, CA	★★★★
4	Justyn Martin, QB, Inglewood, CA	★★★★
5	Carsen Ryan, TE, American Fork, UT	★★★★
6	Clint Stephens, ATH, Inglewood, CA	★★★★
7	Jalen Woods, LB, Bellflower, CA	★★★
8	Sam Yoon, OT, Los Angeles, CA	★★★
9	Braden Pegan, WR, San Juan Capistrano, CA	★★★
10	Tomarion Harden, RB, Inglewood, CA	★★★
11	Croix Stewart, S, Benicia, CA	★★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite

Following three uninspiring seasons in Westwood, Chip Kelly finally delivered a much-needed breakthrough in leading UCLA to an 8–4 record in 2021. An unfortunate COVID outbreak cost the team a shot at a ninth win for the first time in seven years, but signs of progress were clear amid a campaign that featured a victory over a ranked SEC team, a historic thumping of the Bruins' crosstown rival and even begrudging respect from a skeptical fan base.

Now comes the harder part for the Bruins: going from good to great and delivering a Pac-12 South title. Kelly, fresh contract extension in hand, understands the expectations and has an overhauled defensive staff intent on helping meet them. The star quarterback is back for another shot, as is the productive tailback who became the focal point of the offense for long stretches. The schedule is as easy as it has been in years, and the rest of the conference appears to be in transition.

Can UCLA seize the opportunity? The stars have aligned, but it remains to be seen if more than incremental progress can be realized on the field in what could be an inflection point for both the Bruins and the rest of the Pac-12.

OFFENSE UCLA's courting of transfer quarterbacks appeared to signal that Dorian Thompson-Robinson was off to the NFL, but he surprised many in announcing a return for a fifth year as the starter. The electric dual-threat has gotten progressively better each season and is coming off All-Pac-12 honors after throwing for 2,409 yards and 21 touchdowns in the conference's highest-scoring offense. If he can go from being a West Coast name to a national one like his talent suggests, the Bruins can survive breaking in a few new names on offense.

Helping out in the backfield is Zach Charbonnet (1,137 rushing yards, 13 TDs), a 220-pound bruiser between the tackles who is equally shifty in the open field. He'll handle the bulk of the workload as the No. 1 tailback and should factor more into the passing game (24 receptions) on third downs.

Who else will catch passes is arguably a bigger question for Kelly to answer during a soft non-conference schedule, with two-thirds of the team's production having departed. RB/WR Kazmeir Allen will be used creatively in various formations, while Duke transfer Jake Bobo is line to become the new No. 1 given his experience (All-ACC third team, 74 catches in 2021) and size (6'5", 215). Logan Loya is the obvious starter out of the slot but could be pushed by freshman Jadyn Marshall, among others.

In the trenches, the offensive line has to hope that last year's excellent effort was not a flash in the pan. The interior spots manned by Sam Marrazzo, Atonio Mafi and Jon Gaines II should prove to be decent building blocks while sorting out improved depth and starters at the tackle spots between Rutgers transfer Raiqwon O'Neal and Garrett DiGiorgio.

DORIAN THOMPSON-ROBINSON

Peter Brouillet

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Bowling Green
Sept. 10	Alabama State
Sept. 17	South Alabama
Sept. 24	at Colorado
Sept. 30	Washington
Oct. 8	Utah
Oct. 22	at Oregon
Oct. 29	Stanford
Nov. 5	at Arizona State
Nov. 12	Arizona
Nov. 19	USC
Nov. 25	at California

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 8-4, 6-3 PAC-12

Aug. 28	Hawaii	W	44-10
Sept. 4	LSU	W	38-27
Sept. 18	Fresno State	L	37-40
Sept. 25	at Stanford	W	35-24
Oct. 2	Arizona State	L	23-42
Oct. 9	at Arizona	W	34-16
Oct. 16	at Washington	W	24-17
Oct. 23	Oregon	L	31-34
Oct. 30	at Utah	L	24-44
Nov. 13	Colorado	W	44-20
Nov. 20	at USC	W	62-33
Nov. 27	California	W	42-14

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	PAC-12	NATIONAL
Scoring	36.5 ppg	1	12
Rushing	215.1 ypg	2	14
Passing	226.2 ypg	4	70
Total	441.2 ypg	2	31

DEFENSE	PER GAME	PAC-12	NATIONAL
Scoring	26.8 ppg	8	74
Rushing	124.2 ypg	2	23
Passing	260.2 ypg	12	107
Total	384.4 ypg	7	70

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	PAC-12	NATIONAL
+7	+0.58	3	22

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	30.8	28
Defense	30.2	92
Margin	+0.6	55

Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	48.5%	14
Defense	44.9%	95
Margin	+3.6%	45

Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	6.4	32
Defense	5.6	66
Margin	+0.8	42

Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.7	23
Defense	4.3	88
Margin	+0.4	59

Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	3.3	22
Actual	5	32
Margin	+1.7	51

KEY: **1**-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

0.173

UCLA's offense was one of the best in the FBS on early downs, averaging 0.173 EPA/play on first and second down, ranking seventh in the nation.

45.3%

UCLA's defense ranked 113th nationally in rushing efficiency, allowing a 45.3 percent success rate and 5.15 yards per carry.

7.08

UCLA was not a disciplined team in 2021. The Bruins averaged 7.08 penalties per game, tied for 102nd nationally in that category. They tied for 109th at 64.5 penalty yards per game.

DEFENSE Following Jerry Azzinaro's resignation, it was not surprising to see Kelly turn to a familiar face in Bill McGovern to be UCLA's new defensive coordinator. The longtime NFL assistant does have limited college experience calling plays but will chiefly be tasked with fixing a porous pass defense that finished at the bottom of the Pac-12.

It doesn't help that Qwuantrezz Knight leaves a massive leadership void on the back end, but there is at least talent on hand to work with. Safety Stephan Blaylock is a veteran in every sort of the word given the snaps he's logged and should pair well with the rangy Kenny Churchwell III over the middle of the field. Wyoming transfer Azizi Hearn will have an impact early on, and sophomore Devin Kirkwood possesses all-conference talent that he hopes to showcase with increased playing time.

The front seven features a fairly deep list of contributors, and the staff is hoping that a star or two will emerge. Twins Gabriel and Grayson Murphy should have no issues seeing their games translate from North Texas to the Power 5 level and will be the primary source of a pass rush. A healthy Martin Andrus Jr. and Jay Toia are two stout anchors in the middle of the line, while linebackers like Hawaii transfer Darius Muasau and Kain Medrano clean up the rest. One breakout candidate who should benefit from the staff change given his speed, athleticism and positional versatility is pass rusher Carl Jones Jr.

SPECIALISTS Nicholas Barr-Mira was third in the league in scoring (7.8 ppg) and nailed some big kicks in powder blue last season but must improve his consistency. Allen is a threat to house it in the kick return game, but punt returns could be a bit more challenging after the Bruins were spoiled by Kyle Philips' efforts over the years.

FINAL ANALYSIS Incremental improvement in Kelly's early tenure finally gave way to tangible results last year, but those results bring even loftier expectations on the field for 2022. UCLA boasts one of the best quarterbacks in the conference, a top-flight tailback and a defense with a much higher floor following recent staff changes. The door is clearly open for the Bruins to do more than just contend in the Pac-12 South this season, but actually delivering on that potential will require an even more meaningful step forward as a program.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	17	Logan Loya (So.)		Titus Mokiao-Atimalala (So.)
WR		Jake Bobo (Sr.)	12	Matt Sykes (So.)
WR	19	Kazmeir Allen (Jr.)	**0**	**Kam Brown (So.)**
LT		Raiqwon O'Neal (Sr.)	76	Patrick Selna (So.)
LG	56	Atonio Mafi (Sr.)		Sam Yoon (Fr.)
C	**64**	**Sam Marrazzo (Sr.)**	**62**	**Duke Clemens (Jr.)**
RG	**57**	**Jon Gaines II (Jr.)**	54	Josh Carlin (So.)
RT	72	Garrett DiGiorgio (Fr.)	50	Tyler Manoa (Sr.)
TE	86	Michael Ezeike (Sr.)	88	Mike Martinez (Jr.)
QB	**1**	**Dorian Thompson-Robinson (Sr.)**	4	Ethan Garbers (Fr.)
RB	**24**	**Zach Charbonnet (Jr.)**	22	Keegan Jones (So.)

DEFENSE (2)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE		Grayson Murphy (So.)		Gabriel Murphy (So.)
DT	93	Jay Toia (Fr.)	44	Martin Andrus Jr. (Sr.)
DL		Gary Smith III (So.)		Jacob Sykes (Sr.)
EDGE	**33**	**Bo Calvert (Sr.)**	35	Carl Jones Jr. (Jr.)
LB	0	Damian Sellers (So.)	21	JonJon Vaughns (So.)
LB		Darius Muasau (Jr.)	10	Ale Kaho (Jr.)
LB	20	Kain Medrano (So.)	52	Jeremiah Trojan (Fr.)
CB		Azizi Hearn (Sr.)	12	Martell Irby (Jr.)
CB	26	Devin Kirkwood (Fr.)	6	John Humphrey (So.)
SS	**4**	**Stephan Blaylock (Sr.)**		Kamari Ramsey (Fr.)
FS	28	Kenny Churchwell III (Jr.)	7	Mo Osling III (Sr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	2	Nicholas Barr-Mira (So.)	**KR**	19	Kazmeir Allen (Jr.)
P		Chase Barry (Fr.)	**PR**	0	Kam Brown (So.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	**ATT**	**COMP**	**YDS**	**TD**	**INT**
D. Thompson-Robinson	**283**	**176**	**2,409**	**21**	**6**
Ethan Garbers	**51**	**31**	**305**	**2**	**2**

Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**
Zach Charbonnet	**203**	**1,137**	**5.6**	**13**
Brittain Brown	102	615	6.0	7
D. Thompson-Robinson	**130**	**609**	**4.7**	**9**
Kazmeir Allen	**8**	**93**	**11.6**	**1**
Ethan Fernea	10	83	8.3	1

Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**
Kyle Philips	59	739	12.5	10
Greg Dulcich	42	725	17.3	5
Zach Charbonnet	**24**	**197**	**8.2**	**0**
Chase Cota	18	286	15.9	1
Brittain Brown	18	129	7.2	0

KICKING: **Nicholas Barr-Mira, 14-21 FGs, 94 pts.**
TACKLES: Qwuantrezz Knight, 66; Jordan Genmark Heath, 55
SACKS: **Bo Calvert, 4.0**
INTERCEPTIONS: Quentin Lake, 3; Jay Shaw, 3

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE BRUINS

Opposing Coaches Size Up UCLA

"A very hard program to read from the outside. Is everyone involved at the school really committed to being elite in football? You hear stories that they're always half-in, or they're not on the same page. … The problem with Chip [Kelly] is that everyone does what Chip did to become a famous innovator, at least on the field. But where he really shined, what made him different was all the stuff behind the scenes. Sleep studies and practice structures and when to go light, and how to coach speed. Are they innovating like that? … DTR [Dorian Thompson-Robinson] is a hell of a talent. He's been unfairly maligned at times. But he's got a hell of a high ceiling. When he's got a hot hand, they can run with anyone and light it up. … A lot of coaches have noticed how UCLA has sat back a lot in recruiting. It's almost as if Chip brought more of an NFL scouting mentality back to college recruiting, and that just won't work. They still have holes on their roster, and it's because they're not as aggressive as they need to be. … They've missed the window on making significant steps in L.A. now that USC has hired a new staff. … We've all been waiting for Chip to unveil some kind of Version 2.0, some kind of new thing that changes the game as much as they did at Oregon, and maybe that's not going to happen. Maybe they're just a good program with a reasonable expectation for wins. But that's not how they sold it when he got there."

USC TROJANS

National Forecast: 9 • Pac-12 South Prediction: 2 • Projected Record: 9-3, 6-3 Pac-12

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Lincoln Riley
RECORD AT SCHOOL: First Season
CAREER RECORD: 55-10 (5 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Josh Henson
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Alex Grinch
LOCATION: Los Angeles, CA
STADIUM: Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum (77,500)

KEY TROJANS

CALEB WILLIAMS, QB Despite starting just seven times at Oklahoma, he passed for 1,912 yards and had 27 total touchdowns, earning Freshman All-America honors after bumping a preseason Heisman favorite (Spencer Rattler) to the Sooners bench.

TRAVIS DYE, RB A workhorse in the backfield, Dye led Oregon in rushing (1,271 yards) and receiving (46 receptions for 402 yards) last season. He says he's entering his one season at USC with a chip on his shoulder.

CALEN BULLOCK, DB Freshman All-American played three different positions in the secondary and nabbed two interceptions. For his sophomore season, Bullock plans on being a more vocal leader on the defense.

KEY LOSSES

DRAKE LONDON, WR Carried USC for long stretches on his way to earning Pac-12 Offensive Player of the Year honors despite missing a month.

DRAKE JACKSON, LB A three-year starter who earned All-Pac-12 honors, Jackson was a constant presence in the opponent's backfield, posting 25 career tackles for a loss and 12.5 sacks.

KEDON SLOVIS, QB Completed a school-record 68 percent of his passes and threw 58 TDs with 24 interceptions as a multiyear starter under center.

RISING STAR

The top recruit in the state of California despite a knee injury that ended his senior year early, cornerback **DOMANI JACKSON** combines legitimate track speed (10.25 in the 100-meter dash) with prototypical NFL size. The cornerstone of a small USC recruiting class, Jackson enrolled early and was on campus for spring drills. Jackson was the No. 2-rated cornerback in his class according to the 247Sports Composite.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Domani Jackson, CB, Santa Ana, CA	★★★★★
2	Raleek Brown, RB, Santa Ana, CA	★★★★
3	Zion Branch, S, Las Vegas, NV	★★★★
4	CJ Williams, WR, Santa Ana, CA	★★★★
5	Fabian Ross, CB, Las Vegas, NV	★★★★
6	Devan Thompkins, Edge, Stockton, CA	★★★
7	Garrison Madden, LB, Hampton, GA	★★★
8	Atticus Bertrams, P, Melbourne, Aus.	★★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite

Seismic shifts are nothing new in Southern California, but few would have predicted that the ultimate landscape-altering move came not via Richter scale nor Hollywood production, but courtesy of USC's announcement that Lincoln Riley was taking over as the Trojans' head coach. It's rare that one can stun the college football world, but it's safe to say that an overnight poaching of the 38-year-old architect of three playoff appearances, a pair of Heismans and multiple NFL quarterbacks — at fellow blueblood Oklahoma, no less — qualifies.

Amid renewed optimism in Los Angeles, however, comes the tall task of reigniting a down-on-its-luck program that once mesmerized the sport. Riley understands that the expectations are to win immediately, return prestige to the flagship West Coast power and get Troy competitive again on the national stage. A nearly unprecedented roster revamp was undertaken to help hit those goals sooner rather than later, bringing in a swath of high-profile transfers to supplement the usual complement of four- and five-stars from the high school ranks.

How it melds together over the course of 2022 figures to be worthy of interest far beyond the reaches of L.A., with no shortage of storylines surrounding a program capable of landing pretty much anywhere in the standings.

OFFENSE Caleb Williams' guiding principle during a month-long sojourn into the transfer portal was to sort out which school would best put the electric quarterback in position to become a No. 1 overall pick. That he reunited with his old coach wasn't shocking, but is perhaps telling for a signal-caller who earned Freshman All-America honors and bumped a preseason Heisman favorite to the bench. Although Williams will have a new supporting cast, lofty expectations aren't misplaced for somebody who could be the best in the Pac-12 already.

As much attention as QBs get in Riley's version of the Air Raid, it's an offense that's predicated on an effective ground game. That's music to the ears of two intra-conference transfers expected to carry the load — Oregon's Travis Dye (fifth on the Ducks' career rushing list) and Stanford's Austin Jones (4.2 ypc). Both are threats in the passing game, too, but will need to stay upright for a full season. Junior Darwin Barlow and four-star recruit Raleek Brown figure to earn playing time.

Depth is less of an issue at receiver — thanks again to the transfer portal. Mario Williams was Oklahoma's second-leading pass-catcher and has natural chemistry with the quarterback. Brenden Rice, son of NFL legend Jerry, should double the production he had at Colorado. Terrell Bynum arrives after making 19 starts for Washington. Gary Bryant Jr. and Tahj Washington are the Trojans' lone returning starters across the skill positions.

The offensive line should also be something to build around, with Virginia transfer tackle Bobby Haskins supplementing a group that includes an All Pac-12-caliber guard in Andrew Vorhees and four-year starting center Brett Neilon.

GARY BRYANT JR.

Peter Brouillet

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Rice
Sept. 10	at Stanford
Sept. 17	Fresno State
Sept. 24	at Oregon State
Oct. 1	Arizona State
Oct. 8	Washington State
Oct. 15	at Utah
Oct. 29	at Arizona
Nov. 5	California
Nov. 11	Colorado
Nov. 19	at UCLA
Nov. 26	Notre Dame

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 4-8, 3-6 PAC-12

Sept. 4	San Jose State	W	30-7
Sept. 11	Stanford	L	28-42
Sept. 18	at Washington State	W	45-14
Sept. 25	Oregon State	L	27-45
Oct. 2	at Colorado	W	37-14
Oct. 9	Utah	L	26-42
Oct. 23	at Notre Dame	L	16-31
Oct. 30	Arizona	W	41-34
Nov. 6	at Arizona State	L	16-31
Nov. 20	UCLA	L	33-62
Nov. 27	BYU	L	31-35
Dec. 4	at California	L	14-24

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	PAC-12	NATIONAL
Scoring	28.7 ppg	5	65
Rushing	145.6 ypg	7	80
Passing	298.3 ypg	1	17
Total	443.9 ypg	1	23

DEFENSE	PER GAME	PAC-12	NATIONAL
Scoring	31.8 ppg	11	103
Rushing	167.1 ypg	8	88
Passing	241.8 ypg	9	89
Total	408.9 ypg	10	89

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	PAC-12	NATIONAL
-1	-0.08	9	74

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	26.3	119
Defense	27.2	25
Margin	-0.9	78
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	46.9%	24
Defense	47.9%	120
Margin	-1.0%	81
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	6.0	65
Defense	6.6	114
Margin	-0.6	99
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.5	40
Defense	4.5	108
Margin	+0.0	84
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	-4.3	115
Actual	-1	71
Margin	+3.3	37

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

51

USC's defense allowed 51 big plays, 54th most in college football. The Trojans were primarily troubled by opposing passing attacks, allowing 0.235 EPA/play, ranking 119th.

48.4%

USC ranked 16th in third-down offense in 2021. The Trojans faced an average distance of 6.72 yards to go on third downs and converted 48.4 percent of their attempts.

5.23

The USC defense allowed opponents to score 5.23 points per quality possession. USC allowed 48 touchdowns on 127 quality possessions.

DEFENSE New coordinator Alex Grinch is no stranger to turnarounds, having been handed the defensive keys by Ohio State and Oklahoma based on taking Washington State to the top half in just about every statistical category from 2015-17. He has his work cut out for him to fix a defense that allowed 31.8 points per game. Luckily, the cupboard isn't bare.

Up front, junior Tuli Tuipulotu is set for an even bigger role after first-team All-Pac-12 honors while leading the team in sacks and forced fumbles. He'll play opposite high-motor senior Nick Figueroa and Brandon Pili inside. Kansas State transfer Tyrone Taleni and TCU's Earl Barquet Jr. could also challenge for starting gigs.

Behind them is a group filled with intrigue. Former No. 1 recruit Korey Foreman didn't quite have the impact expected in his first season (2.5 sacks) and will have competition coming off the edge from Auburn transfer Romello Height. Returning starter Ralen Goforth will have to fight off younger competition to remain with a first unit that should feature a 13-game starter from Alabama in Shane Lee and freshman All-American Eric Gentry from Arizona State.

The secondary is not immune to turnover but has two building blocks in safeties Xavion Alford (team-leading three INTs) and Calen Bullock. The latter was named a Freshman All-American in 2021 and will benefit from the return of nickel back Max Williams from a knee injury. Transfers Mekhi Blackmon (Colorado) and Latrell McCutchin (Oklahoma) will get first crack at the two corner spots but will be pushed for playing time by five-star freshman Domani Jackson and youngsters Prophet Brown and Ceyair Wright.

SPECIALISTS USC will feature a revamped special teams unit for 2022, right down to a new long snapper. Kickoff specialist Alex Stadthaus will add field-goal duties to his plate, while Australian freshman Atticus Bertrams handles punts.

FINAL ANALYSIS The arrival of Riley is poised to be transformational for USC long term — a clear sign of ambition to return to the sport's elite. As lofty as such goals are, though, it's hard to forget that the Trojans were 4–8 and experienced a roster turnover greater than any in college football. Even with a new-coach bounce, a prolific quarterback and a manageable schedule, the 2022 team has just enough question marks to signal that this season is more likely to lay the foundation for the Riley era than it is to truly realize a return to glory.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	4	Mario Williams (So.)	**1**	**Gary Bryant Jr. (Jr.)**
WR	0	Terrell Bynum (Sr.)	**16**	**Tahj Washington (Jr.)**
WR	2	Brenden Rice (Jr.)	8	CJ Williams (Fr.)
LT	70	Bobby Haskins (Sr.)	76	Mason Murphy (Fr.)
LG	**72**	**Andrew Vorhees (Sr.)**	77	Jason Rodriguez (Jr.)
C	**62**	**Brett Neilon (Sr.)**	78	Andrew Milek (So.)
RG	**79**	**Jonah Monheim (So.)**	57	Justin Dedich (Sr.)
RT	**74**	**Courtland Ford (So.)**	76	Mason Murphy (Fr.)
TE	19	Malcolm Epps (Sr.)	87	Lake McRee (Fr.)
QB	13	Caleb Williams (So.)	7	Miller Moss (Fr.)
RB	26	Travis Dye (Sr.)	6	Austin Jones (Sr.)

DEFENSE (3)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	**49**	**Tuli Tuipulotu (Jr.)**	31	Tyrone Taleni (Sr.)
DT	91	Brandon Pili (Sr.)	97	Earl Barquet Jr. (Jr.)
DE	50	Nick Figueroa (Sr.)	**47**	**Stanley Ta'ufo'ou (Jr.)**
OLB	2	Romello Height (So.)	0	Korey Foreman (So.)
ILB		Eric Gentry (So.)	9	Raesjon Davis (So.)
ILB	53	Shane Lee (Sr.)	**10**	**Ralen Goforth (Sr.)**
OLB	30	Chris Thompson Jr. (Jr.)	24	Julien Simon (Fr.)
CB	21	Latrell McCutchin (So.)	4	Max Williams (Jr.)
CB	6	Mekhi Blackmon (Sr.)	1	Domani Jackson (Fr.)
S	27	Calen Bullock (So.)		Bryson Shaw (So.)
S	29	Xavion Alford (So.)	19	Jaylin Smith (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	38	Alex Stadthaus (Sr.)	**KR**	16	Tahj Washington (Jr.)
P		Atticus Bertrams (Fr.)	**PR**	1	Gary Bryant Jr. (Jr.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	**ATT**	**COMP**	**YDS**	**TD**	**INT**
Kedon Slovis	297	193	2,153	11	8
Jaxson Dart	189	117	1,353	9	5
Miller Moss	**13**	**8**	**74**	**1**	**0**
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Keaontay Ingram	156	911	5.8	5	
Vavae Malepeai	114	502	4.4	6	
Darwin Barlow	**62**	**289**	**4.7**	**2**	
Brandon Campbell	12	53	4.4	0	
Jaxson Dart	22	43	2.0	2	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Drake London	88	1,084	12.3	7	
Tahj Washington	**54**	**602**	**11.1**	**1**	
Gary Bryant Jr.	**44**	**579**	**13.2**	**7**	
Keaontay Ingram	22	156	7.1	0	
Kyle Ford	**19**	**252**	**13.3**	**2**	

KICKING: Parker Lewis, 17-22 FGs, 73 pts.
TACKLES: Kana'i Mauga, 90; **Ralen Goforth, 61**
SACKS: **Tuli Tuipulotu, 5.5**
INTERCEPTIONS: **Xavion Alford, 3**

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE TROJANS

Opposing Coaches Size Up USC

"They're going to be a powerhouse. The question is how long it's going to take and what they're going to look like when it happens. … Lincoln [Riley] is a great coach. I would describe him as having elite emotional intelligence. He's gonna recruit his ass off, and he'll make the USC brand cool again. Even with the portal, it will take him two years to get the talent they need to be nationally relevant and ahead of Utah in the South, but eventually they're going to do it. … The problem for the rest of us in the league is that it's a brand-new everything. They're the most unknown program in the league top to bottom. So many guys have left; so many have come in. Last year's film won't really give you anything. … Caleb [Williams] is a really talented kid. He's going to thrive when they get everyone on the same page. How physical are they going to be? The style OU played was a physical Air Raid, moreso than the usual Big 12 teams. If you go back and look through their entire history, when USC plays physical, they win titles. When they're not, they just put up stats. It's really that simple. The physicality means they're getting those elite guys on both lines. It means they're developing NFL dudes, and they're a mile ahead of the league. At this point, I think it would be good to have them back on top for a while, for just about everyone except for Oregon and UCLA, maybe."

UTAH UTES

National Forecast: 8 • Pac-12 South Prediction: 1 • Projected Record: 11-2, 7-2 Pac-12

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Kyle Whittingham
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 144-70 (17+ years)
CAREER RECORD: 144-70 (17+ years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Andy Ludwig
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Morgan Scalley
LOCATION: Salt Lake City, UT
STADIUM: Rice-Eccles Stadium (51,444)

KEY UTES

CAMERON RISING, QB First-team All-Pac-12 quarterback steadied the program after a 1–2 start, steering it to its first Pac-12 championship and subsequent Rose Bowl appearance.

TAVION THOMAS, RB Overcame early-season ball-security issues to rush for a team-high 1,108 yards and a program single-season record 21 touchdowns.

CLARK PHILLIPS III, CB The highest-rated recruit in program history took tangible steps forward in 2021 as a shutdown, ball-hawking cornerback in Utah's 4-2-5 defensive alignment.

KEY LOSSES

DEVIN LLOYD, LB Arguably the greatest defensive player in program history, Lloyd was a consensus All-American in 2021 after finishing with 110 tackles and four interceptions, including a pick-6 vs. Oregon in the Pac-12 Championship Game.

MIKA TAFUA, DE A stalwart along Utah's typically stout defensive line, Tafua led the Pac-12 with 9.5 sacks in sacks in 2021.

NICK FORD, C Utah's most versatile offensive lineman and a three-time All-Pac-12 selection, Ford leaves a significant hole at center, where he was Utah's typical starter over the last two seasons.

RISING STAR

A highly touted four-star recruit from nearby Brighton High School, linebacker **LANDER BARTON** figures to play a role immediately in a linebacker room that is always deep but is currently looking to replace an All-American in Devin Lloyd and an All-Pac-12 selection in Nephi Sewell. Barton is a lock to land on the two-deep for the opener at Florida and may start.

2022 RECRUITS

1	Lander Barton, LB, Salt Lake City, UT	★★★★
2	Nate Johnson, QB, Clovis, CA	★★★★
3	Jaylon Glover, RB, Lakeland, FL	★★★★
4	Justin Medlock, LB, Manvel, TX	★★★
5	Brandon Rose, QB, Murrieta, CA	★★★
6	Ka'eo Akana, LB, Honolulu, HI	★★★
7	Ryan Peppins, WR, Alabaster, AL	★★★
8	Sidney Mbanasor, TE, Pflugerville, TX	★★★
9	Tao Johnson, ATH, Idaho Falls, ID	★★★
10	Elijah Davis, S, Auburndale, FL	★★★
11	Jocelyn Malaska, CB, Bethany, OK	★★★
12	Dallas Vakalahi, DL, Salt Lake City, UT	★★★
13	Keith Olson, OT, Napavine, WA	★★★
14	Chris Reed, WR, Apopka, FL	★★★
15	Chase Kennedy, Edge, Dallas, TX	★★★
16	Tyler Knaak, OT, Salt Lake City, UT	★★★

Rankings according to 247Sports Composite

The last time the University of Utah football team took the field, it did so at the Rose Bowl, capping a landmark season for Kyle Whittingham's program.

Winners of a third Pac-12 South title in four seasons, the Utes finally got over the hump, winning the Pac-12 championship game and advancing to "The Granddaddy of Them All."

Last season's 10-win campaign is in the rearview mirror, but with many of the principal characters from that run returning in 2022, there is a healthy dose of optimism that Utah can accomplish those feats again, if not more.

OFFENSE Now a fifth-year junior, Cameron Rising lost a fall camp quarterback competition to Charlie Brewer, but things eventually came back around to Rising. He entered the fray in Week 3 at San Diego State and became the full-time starter in Week 4, and Utah never looked back. The Utes went 9–2 with Rising under center as he threw for 2,493 yards and 20 touchdowns against just five interceptions while completing 63.8 percent of his passes.

Five of Utah's top six pass-catchers from 2021 are again at Rising's disposal, led by tight ends Brant Kuithe (50 catches, 611 yards, six TDs) and Dalton Kincaid (36 catches, 510 yards, eight TDs), both of whom flirted with the NFL Draft before opting for one more year of school.

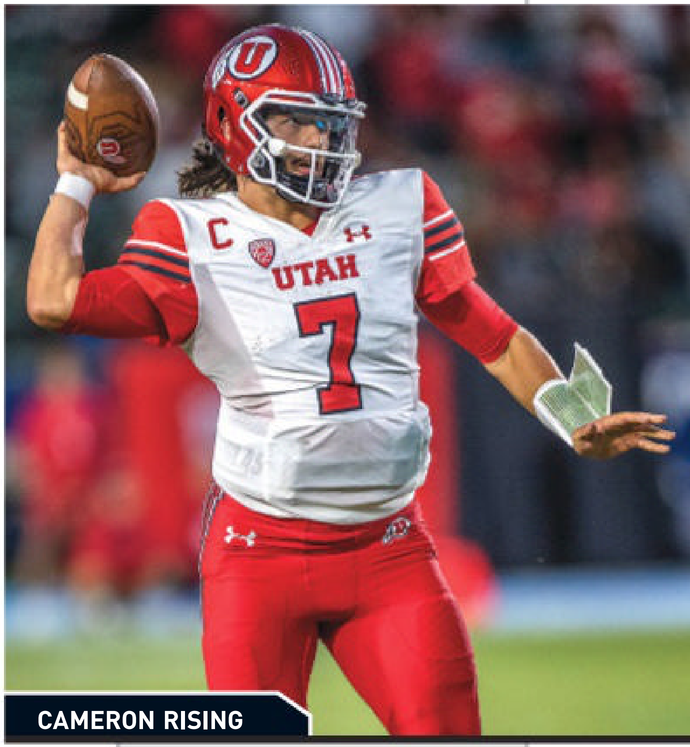
There are questions at wide receiver with do-everything slot Britain Covey now gone. Devaughn Vele projects as WR1 after showing flashes last season, with Jaylen Dixon and Solomon Enis both figuring into the mix. Money Parks had a productive spring and could be the answer to replace Covey out of the slot.

A crowded situation at running back last fall eventually gave way to Tavion Thomas, who finished with 1,108 yards and 21 touchdowns and then spurned the NFL for one more go-around in college. Thomas and Micah Bernard are veteran options, while four-star freshman Jaylon Glover is in line for immediate carries after a stat-filled career at Lake Gibson (Fla.) High School.

Utah's offensive line, a major strength as 2021 wore on, will see some shuffling with Nick Ford and Bamidele Olaseni gone to the NFL. The major question is what Whittingham will do with Jaren Kump, who missed most of last season with a knee injury. Kump was recruited as a tackle but could kick inside to center given his versatility. Braeden Daniels appears a safe bet to replace Olaseni at left tackle, but the question then becomes who takes over for Daniels at his right tackle spot. Kump could also slot in there, possibly leaving center to Paul Maile, who started a handful of games there last season.

DEFENSE The major spring practice storyline within Utah's defense was what happens at linebacker with Devin Lloyd and Nephi Sewell both gone to the NFL.

Linebackers coach Colton Swan has a deep stable of options, but three stand out among the rest for those two starting spots. Florida transfer Mohamoud Diabate missed all of spring practice with a shoulder injury but is expected to be ready for fall camp. Karene Reid is a



CAMERON RISING

Peter Brouillet

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	at Florida
Sept. 10	Southern Utah
Sept. 17	San Diego State
Sept. 24	at Arizona State
Oct. 1	Oregon State
Oct. 8	at UCLA
Oct. 15	USC
Oct. 27	at Washington State
Nov. 5	Arizona
Nov. 12	Stanford
Nov. 19	at Oregon
Nov. 26	at Colorado

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 10-4, 8-1 PAC-12

Sept. 2	Weber State	W	40-17
Sept. 11	at BYU	L	17-26
Sept. 18	at San Diego State (ot)	L	31-33
Sept. 25	Washington State	W	24-13
Oct. 9	at USC	W	42-26
Oct. 16	Arizona State	W	35-21
Oct. 23	at Oregon State	L	34-42
Oct. 30	UCLA	W	44-24
Nov. 5	at Stanford	W	52-7
Nov. 13	at Arizona	W	38-29
Nov. 20	Oregon	W	38-7
Nov. 26	Colorado	W	28-13
Dec. 3	vs. Oregon #	W	38-10
Jan. 1	vs. Ohio State %	L	45-48

#Las Vegas %Rose Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	PAC-12	NATIONAL
Scoring	36.1 ppg	2	14
Rushing	216.8 ypg	1	13
Passing	214.3 ypg	10	84
Total	431.1 ypg	3	40

DEFENSE	PER GAME	PAC-12	NATIONAL
Scoring	22.6 ppg	3	35
Rushing	119.4 ypg	1	19
Passing	222.3 ypg	6	60
Total	341.6 ypg	3	27

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	PAC-12	NATIONAL
+1	+0.07	7	69

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	31.2	16
Defense	27.0	22
Margin	+4.2	16
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	48.2%	17
Defense	40.1%	44
Margin	+8.1%	20
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	6.5	20
Defense	5.4	36
Margin	+1.1	18
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.3	54
Defense	3.4	19
Margin	+0.9	18
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	-1.5	90
Actual	1	57
Margin	+2.5	43

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

63.8%

Utah's offense ranked third in college football in generating a quality possession on 63.8 percent of drives. The Utes scored 4.77 points per quality possession, ranking 41st nationally.

50.6%

Utah converted 50.6 percent of its third-down attempts, ninth best in college football. Utah faced an average distance of 6.42 yards to go, and 52.6 percent of its third-down successes were rushes.

0.209

In the run game, Utah ranked fourth in explosiveness. Utah ranked 63rd in rush rate over expectation but still averaged 0.209 EPA/rush.

known commodity after playing in 10 games in 2021, including six starts, and freshman Lander Barton has the chops to make an immediate impact.

The back end has fewer questions than it did at the end of last season. All-Pac-12 cornerback JaTravis Broughton missed most of last season with a shoulder injury but is back healthy to pair with Clark Phillips III, along with Malone Mataele. Depth on the outside behind Broughton and Phillips was an issue late last season and is a question now heading into fall.

Sophomore Cole Bishop emerged late last season as potentially the next great Utah safety, while R.J. Hubert, beset by injuries for much of the last two seasons, is ready to return. Those two, plus incoming Illinois State transfer and two-time FCS All-American Clayton Isbell, will vie for the two safety spots.

Whittingham was pleased with his defensive line during spring practice. Van Fillinger will anchor one end spot, with Stanford transfer Gabe Reid likely at the other. Keep an eye on defensive tackle, where Junior Tafuna emerged in late September, earning Pac-12 Freshman Defensive Player of the Year honors.

SPECIALISTS Whittingham, a former special teams coach, lamented the troubles there throughout last season, specifically at punter. Between Cameron Peasley and Michael Williams, three punts were blocked last season, and a fourth block was called off due to a penalty. Peasley entered the portal in the spring, so the job belongs to Williams.

Jadon Redding and Jordan Noyes also went through an in-season competition after Redding initially won the job out of camp. Redding, a former All-Pac-12 performer, ended last season with the job, while Noyes generally handles kickoff duties.

The big hole to fill is at return specialist, which Covey manned as one of the nation's best. A number of guys could slide in for punts and kickoffs, including Vele, Dixon and Phillips.

FINAL ANALYSIS There has been considerable hype around Utah based on what it accomplished last season, and also on who is coming back.

Utah, second in the Pac-12 and 14th nationally in points per game, will score. If the defense can get the linebacker situation figured out, the Utes are a legitimate favorite to win the Pac-12 South and Pac-12 titles again. The opener at Florida will help determine if they are a viable College Football Playoff contender.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)				
WR	**17**	**Devaughn Vele (So.)**	21	Solomon Enis (Sr.)
WR	25	Jaylen Dixon (Sr.)	28	Pierre Moudourou (Sr.)
WR	10	Money Parks (So.)	0	Kyrese Rowan (So.)
LT	**71**	**Braeden Daniels (Jr.)**	75	Tyler Knaak (Fr.)
LG	**51**	**Keaton Bills (So.)**	53	Johnny Maea (Jr.)
C	68	Jaren Kump (So.)	54	Paul Maile (Jr.)
RG	62	Michael Mokofisi (Fr.)	**78**	**Sataoa Laumea (So.)**
RT	59	Falcon Kaumatule (So.)	76	Zereoue Williams (Fr.)
TE	**80**	**Brant Kuithe (Sr.)**	87	Thomas Yassmin (Jr.)
TE	**86**	**Dalton Kincaid (Sr.)**	4	Munir McClain (So.)
QB	**7**	**Cameron Rising (Jr.)**	3	Ja'Quinden Jackson (Fr.)
RB	**9**	**Tavion Thomas (Jr.)**	1	Jaylon Glover (Fr.)
DEFENSE (5)			Returning Starters in **BOLD**	
DE	**7**	**Van Fillinger (So.)**	47	Miki Suguturaga (So.)
DT	**58**	**Junior Tafuna (So.)**	90	Devin Kaufusi (Sr.)
DT	95	Aliki Vimahi (So.)	99	Tennessee Pututau (So.)
DE		Gabe Reid (Sr.)	83	Jonah Elliss (So.)
SLB	9	Mohamoud Diabate (Sr.)	34	Josh Calvert (So.)
MLB	20	Lander Barton (Fr.)	54	Hayden Furey (Jr.)
CB	**1**	**Clark Phillips III (So.)**	5	Caine Savage (So.)
CB	**4**	**JaTravis Broughton (Jr.)**	**23**	**Faybian Marks (So.)**
NB	15	Malone Mataele (Jr.)	1	Clark Phillips III (So.)
SS	8	Cole Bishop (So.)		Clayton Isbell (Jr.)
FS	10	R.J. Hubert (Sr.)	19	Bryson Reeves (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	97	Jadon Redding (Jr.)	**KR**	1	Clark Phillips III (So.)
P	61	Michael Williams (Jr.)	**PR**	25	Jaylen Dixon (Sr.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	**ATT**	**COMP**	**YDS**	**TD**	**INT**
Cameron Rising	**320**	**204**	**2,493**	**20**	**5**
Charlie Brewer	79	48	484	3	3
Bryson Barnes	**2**	**2**	**23**	**1**	**0**
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Tavion Thomas	**204**	**1,108**	**5.4**	**21**	
TJ Pledger	104	694	6.7	6	
Micah Bernard	**87**	**523**	**6.0**	**2**	
Cameron Rising	**74**	**499**	**6.7**	**6**	
Britain Covey	14	99	7.1	0	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Britain Covey	52	514	9.9	3	
Brant Kuithe	**50**	**611**	**12.2**	**6**	
Dalton Kincaid	**36**	**510**	**14.2**	**8**	
Micah Bernard	**26**	**251**	**9.7**	**2**	
Devaughn Vele	**23**	**389**	**16.9**	**1**	

KICKING: **Jadon Redding, 10-14 FGs, 71 pts.**
TACKLES: Devin Lloyd, 110; Nephi Sewell, 89
SACKS: Mika Tafua, 9.5
INTERCEPTIONS: Devin Lloyd, 4

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE UTES

Opposing Coaches Size Up Utah

"This is the best program in the Pac-12. I don't think you'll find anyone who would name another team. They could beat Florida to open the season and help the league out tremendously. … They do a fantastic job recruiting to their culture, and they always have. They have cornered the market on what 'physical football' looks like, and coaches from other conferences will tell you that, too. Look at the Oregon games — Mario Cristobal made it a mission to make Oregon more physical on the lines, and the Utes just blew them up twice. It's a testament to the fact it's not easy to do what they do out there. … They do a really good job making Utah a recruiting priority and then complementing with California and Texas. It's a good mix of players, and the success they had last year has helped them push forward on higher-profile talent. I think they could brand themselves better in the portal if they wanted to. … They're schematically simple but fundamentally sound on defense, which is common when you're trying to lead with your physicality. Don't muck it up; let them make contact. … Offensively, they run power with the right wrinkles. You can't get too comfortable with it because they'll slip into some RPO stuff and kill you. … They're going to get lapped by USC eventually, but not right now. As long as that staff is in place, they're going to win games and compete for Rose Bowls."

SEC PREVIEW

EAST DIVISION

PREDICTED ORDER OF FINISH

1	GEORGIA **BULLDOGS**	12-1, 8-0
2	TENNESSEE **VOLUNTEERS**	8-4, 4-4
3	KENTUCKY **WILDCATS**	8-4, 4-4
4	FLORIDA **GATORS**	7-5, 4-4
5	SOUTH CAROLINA **GAMECOCKS**	6-6, 3-5
6	MISSOURI **TIGERS**	5-7, 2-6
7	VANDERBILT **COMMODORES**	3-9, 0-8

WEST DIVISION

PREDICTED ORDER OF FINISH

1	ALABAMA **CRIMSON TIDE**	13-0, 8-0
2	TEXAS A&M **AGGIES**	10-2, 6-2
3	ARKANSAS **RAZORBACKS**	8-4, 4-4
4	LSU **TIGERS**	8-4, 4-4
5	OLE MISS **REBELS**	8-4, 4-4
6	MISSISSIPPI STATE **BULLDOGS**	7-5, 3-5
7	AUBURN **TIGERS**	6-6, 2-6

Games to Watch

Oregon vs. Georgia (Atlanta), Sept. 3
Utah at Florida, Sept. 3
Penn State at Auburn, Sept. 17
Arkansas vs. Texas A&M (Arlington, TX), Sept. 24
Texas A&M at Alabama, Oct. 8
LSU at Florida, Oct. 15
Florida vs. Georgia (Jacksonville, FL), Oct. 29
Kentucky at Tennessee, Oct. 29
Mississippi State at Ole Miss, Nov. 24
Florida at Florida State, Nov. 25
LSU at Texas A&M, Nov. 26
Auburn at Alabama, Nov. 26

WILL ANDERSON JR.

Tom DiPace

SEC Championship:
Alabama over Georgia

Recruiting by School

1. Texas A&M
2. Alabama
3. Georgia
4. LSU
5. Kentucky
6. Missouri
7. Florida
8. Tennessee
9. Auburn
10. Ole Miss
11. South Carolina
12. Mississippi State
13. Arkansas
14. Vanderbilt

ALL-SEC TEAM

FIRST-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	**Bryce Young**	Jr.	Alabama
RB	**Tank Bigsby**	Jr.	Auburn
RB	**Chris Rodriguez Jr.**	Sr.	Kentucky
AP	**Jahmyr Gibbs**	Jr.	Alabama
WR	**Cedric Tillman**	Sr.	Tennessee
WR	**Kayshon Boutte**	Jr.	LSU
TE	**Brock Bowers**	So.	Georgia
C	**Ricky Stromberg**	Sr.	Arkansas
OL	**Layden Robinson**	Jr.	Texas A&M
OL	**Nick Broeker**	Sr.	Ole Miss
OL	**Broderick Jones**	So.	Georgia
OL	**Emil Ekiyor Jr.**	Sr.	Alabama

FIRST-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	**Jalen Carter**	Jr.	Georgia
DL	**Derick Hall**	Sr.	Auburn
DL	**Byron Young**	Sr.	Alabama
DL	**Byron Young**	Sr.	Tennessee
LB	**Will Anderson Jr.**	Jr.	Alabama
LB	**Nolan Smith**	Sr.	Georgia
LB	**Henry To'oTo'o**	Sr.	Alabama
LB	**Bumper Pool**	Sr.	Arkansas
CB	**Kelee Ringo**	So.	Georgia
CB	**Cam Smith**	Jr.	South Carolina
S	**Jordan Battle**	Sr.	Alabama
S	**Antonio Johnson**	Jr.	Texas A&M

FIRST-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	**Harrison Mevis**	Jr.	Missouri	P	**Nik Constantinou**	Jr.	Texas A&M
KR	**Lideatrick Griffin**	Jr.	Mississippi State	PR	**Ainias Smith**	Sr.	Texas A&M

SECOND-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	**Hendon Hooker**	Sr.	Tennessee
RB	**Devon Achane**	Jr.	Texas A&M
RB	**Kenny McIntosh**	Sr.	Georgia
AP	**Ainias Smith**	Sr.	Texas A&M
WR	**Jermaine Burton**	Jr.	Alabama
WR	**Josh Vann**	Sr.	South Carolina
TE	**Jaheim Bell**	Jr.	South Carolina
C	**Sedrick Van Pran**	So.	Georgia
OL	**Javon Foster**	Sr.	Missouri
OL	**Kenneth Horsey**	Sr.	Kentucky
OL	**O'Cyrus Torrence**	Jr.	Florida
OL	**Jeremy James**	Jr.	Ole Miss

SECOND-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	**Maason Smith**	So.	LSU
DL	**Ali Gaye**	Sr.	LSU
DL	**Isaiah McGuire**	Sr.	Missouri
DL	**Colby Wooden**	Jr.	Auburn
LB	**Brenton Cox Jr.**	Jr.	Florida
LB	**BJ Ojulari**	Jr.	LSU
LB	**Dallas Turner**	So.	Alabama
LB	**J.J. Weaver**	Jr.	Kentucky
CB	**Eli Ricks**	Jr.	Alabama
CB	**Emmanuel Forbes**	Jr.	Mississippi State
S	**Jalen Catalon**	Jr.	Arkansas
S	**Christopher Smith**	Sr.	Georgia

SECOND-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	**Will Reichard**	Sr.	Alabama	P	**Oscar Chapman**	Jr.	Auburn
KR	**Jahmyr Gibbs**	Jr.	Alabama	PR	**Kearis Jackson**	Sr.	Georgia

THIRD-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	**KJ Jefferson**	Jr.	Arkansas
RB	**Zach Evans**	Jr.	Ole Miss
RB	**John Emery Jr.**	Sr.	LSU
AP	**Jo'quavious Marks**	Jr.	Mississippi State
WR	**Jonathan Mingo**	Sr.	Ole Miss
WR	**Jaden Walley**	Jr.	Mississippi State
TE	**Cameron Latu**	Sr.	Alabama
C	**Bryce Foster**	So.	Texas A&M
OL	**Keiondre Jones**	Jr.	Auburn
OL	**Beaux Limmer**	Jr.	Arkansas
OL	**Jerome Carvin**	Sr.	Tennessee
OL	**Warren McClendon**	Jr.	Georgia

THIRD-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	**Gervon Dexter**	So.	Florida
DL	**Zacch Pickens**	Sr.	South Carolina
DL	**Tyler Baron**	Jr.	Tennessee
DL	**McKinnley Jackson**	Jr.	Texas A&M
LB	**Anfernee Orji**	Sr.	Vanderbilt
LB	**Jeremy Banks**	Sr.	Tennessee
LB	**Ventrell Miller**	Sr.	Florida
LB	**Robert Beal Jr.**	Sr.	Georgia
CB	**Kool-Aid McKinstry**	So.	Alabama
CB	**Jason Marshall Jr.**	So.	Florida
S	**Demani Richardson**	Sr.	Texas A&M
S	**AJ Finley**	Sr.	Ole Miss

THIRD-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	**Anders Carlson**	Sr.	Auburn	P	**Paxton Brooks**	Sr.	Tennessee
KR	**Juju McDowell**	So.	South Carolina	PR	**Tayvion Robinson**	Sr.	Kentucky

2022 BOWL PROJECTIONS

Birmingham Bowl
Mississippi State vs. Maryland
Citrus Bowl
Tennessee vs. Wisconsin
Gasparilla Bowl
Auburn vs. Louisville
Gator Bowl
Florida vs. Pittsburgh
Las Vegas Bowl
LSU vs. Washington
Liberty Bowl
South Carolina vs. West Virginia
Music City Bowl
Arkansas vs. Iowa
Tampa Bay Bowl
Kentucky vs. Michigan State
Texas Bowl
Ole Miss vs. Texas
Sugar Bowl
Texas A&M vs. Baylor
Fiesta Bowl (CFP semifinal)
Alabama vs. Clemson
Peach Bowl (CFP semifinal)
Georgia vs. Ohio State

2021 STANDINGS

East	SEC	Overall
Georgia	8-0	14-1
Kentucky	5-3	10-3
Tennessee	4-4	7-6
Missouri	3-5	6-7
South Carolina	3-5	7-6
Florida	2-6	6-7
Vanderbilt	0-8	2-10

West	SEC	Overall
Alabama	7-1	13-2
Ole Miss	6-2	10-3
Arkansas	4-4	9-4
Mississippi State	4-4	7-6
Texas A&M	4-4	8-4
Auburn	3-5	6-7
LSU	3-5	6-7

2021 BOWL RESULTS

Armed Forces Bowl
Army 24, Missouri 22
Gasparilla Bowl
UCF 29, Florida 17
Birmingham Bowl
Houston 17, Auburn 13
Liberty Bowl
Texas Tech 34, Mississippi State 7
Duke's Mayo Bowl
South Carolina 38, North Carolina 21
Music City Bowl
Purdue 48, Tennessee 45 (ot)
Outback Bowl
Arkansas 24, Penn State 10
Citrus Bowl
Kentucky 20, Iowa 17
Sugar Bowl
Baylor 21, Ole Miss 7
Texas Bowl
Kansas State 42, LSU 20
Cotton Bowl (CFP semifinal)
Alabama 27, Cincinnati 6
Orange Bowl (CFP semifinal)
Georgia 34, Michigan 11
CFP National Championship
Georgia 33, Alabama 18

10 THINGS TO WATCH in 2022

BY MATT HINTON

JAYDEN DANIELS

1 Transfer QBs Take Over

In the olden days, replacing the starting quarterback was the biggest wild card a college coach could face. Your options tended to be unproven, with little or no meaningful playing time under their belt at the college level, and if they left you with a sinking feeling in the pit of your stomach at the end of spring practice, well, tough luck. You ride into the season with the talent on hand.

These days? If you're not casting as wide a net as possible for the next man up, you're at serious risk of falling behind. In just a few years, relaxed transfer rules have thoroughly upended the way rosters are built and rebuilt, nowhere more so than at the most important position — and nowhere more aggressively, naturally, than in the SEC. At least half of the league's 14 teams this fall are likely to feature a transfer QB as their opening-day starter. Most of them will be new faces in 2022, and all of them come with prior starting experience at their old schools.

Tracking the offseason movement at this point is like keeping score in a game of musical chairs. South Carolina landed one of the crown jewels of the free-agent market, Spencer Rattler, a former five-star prospect who went 15–2 as the starter at Oklahoma before losing his grip on the job midway through last season. LSU and Ole Miss raided the Pac-12 for Jayden Daniels (Arizona State) and Jaxson Dart (USC), respectively. Auburn stayed in the SEC West, adding Zach Calzada from Texas A&M to replace the Oregon-bound Bo Nix; A&M kept it in the division, too, replacing Calzada with former LSU starter Max Johnson. (It's probably no coincidence that Calzada and Johnson were both winners against their new teams in 2021.) Florida lost last year's starter, Emory Jones, but spiced up its spring competition with the arrival of Ohio State transfer Jack Miller III. And among the incumbents, former transfers Hendon Hooker and Will Levis are fully entrenched at Tennessee and Kentucky, respectively, after seizing the job last year in their first season on campus.

Only one SEC team, Missouri, opened the spring on track to fill a vacancy behind center the old-fashioned way, with actual Mizzou recruits Brady Cook and Tyler Macon vying to replace outgoing starter Connor Bazelak following Bazelak's transfer to Indiana. Even there, the Tigers hosted at least one soon-to-be available quarterback on campus, signaling they could still be active in the post-spring market. Why settle for the status quo when an upgrade could be just a phone call away? In the age of the transfer portal, the music never stops, and the business of getting better never sleeps.

2 Heisman Hype for Will Anderson Jr.

The Heisman Trophy has always been an offensive award, and since the turn of the century it's essentially been reserved for quarterbacks: QBs have accounted for 18 of the past 22 Heisman winners and a majority of the finalists in that span. If you play defense, forget it. Since Charles Woodson's historic win in 1997, only five defenders have made the finalist cut — including LSU's Tyrann Mathieu, who, like Woodson, owed much of his place in NYC in 2011 to his contributions in the return game — and none of them have seriously threatened to win it. Alabama linebacker **Will Anderson Jr.**, who finished fifth in last year's vote, didn't even get a token invite to join teammate Bryce Young at the ceremony.

If there's even a remote possibility of a defender breaking the streak, though, clearly Anderson is the dude to do it. As a true freshman in 2020, he started every game and led the nation in QB pressures, according to the film-eaters at Pro Football Focus. As a sophomore, he was the most unblockable player in America, by far, setting the FBS record for tackles for a loss (34.5) since the NCAA began tracking the statistic; for that, he became the first Alabama edge rusher in Nick Saban's tenure to claim the title of consensus All-American. You can go ahead and mark him down next year as the first edge on Saban's watch drafted in the first round, too, and possibly as the first Saban player at any position to go No. 1 overall.

In his last go-round on campus, Anderson has the advantage of being a known quantity with no shortage of preseason hype or goodwill in light of last year's snub. On the other hand, he also faces two distinct disadvantages: One, he's still forced to share the spotlight in Tuscaloosa with a much more conventional candidate in Young; and two, measuring up to his own lofty benchmarks on paper will be close to impossible even if he stays healthy. Compared to his iron-man workload in 2021, Anderson also figures to yield more snaps to a stacked group of underclassmen led by sophomore Dallas Turner. Still, when the time comes to settle on the most outstanding player in the country, Anderson's talent and production might just be too obvious to deny.

3 A&M Aims High

Texas A&M boosters have made no bones about their national championship ambitions, or their willingness to cut the checks to hold up their end of the deal. They shelled out for first-rate facilities. They reset the market to hire a proven winner, Jimbo

Daniels: Jonathan Mailhes/CSM via AP Images Anderson: Crimson Tide Photos/UA Athletics

Fisher, away from Florida State. They committed to giving him every possible advantage in his mission to build a recruiting machine on par with the juggernauts at Alabama and Georgia, culminating last winter with one of the most decorated classes of the online ranking era. On paper, the roster is fully stocked and poised to deliver a healthy return on the investment.

On the field? To be determined. The results over the past two seasons have felt like one step forward, one step back. On one hand, the 2020 team raised the bar right on schedule, turning in a 9–1 record and top-five finish in the AP poll in Fisher's third season; at the same time, it was defined as much by the lone defeat, a blowout loss at Alabama, as it was by the wins. In 2021, the Aggies finally got over the hump against Bama, flashing their potential in a major midseason upset in College Station, only to finish a disappointing 8–4 after back-to-back conference losses vs. Ole Miss and LSU to close the year. (Their subsequent date in the Gator Bowl was canceled due to COVID-19.) The gap between A&M and the elite has not quite closed — yet.

Rest assured that expectations are not going on ice while the rookies get up to speed. The holdovers are a blue-chip group in their own right: Despite some notable departures, top-10 recruiting classes in 2020 and '21 have yielded rising stars at almost every position, including blazing-fast RB Devon Achane, all-purpose threat Ainias Smith, massive O-linemen Bryce Foster and Reuben Fatheree II, and projected future pros Jaylon Jones and Antonio Johnson in the secondary. The quarterback competition is as intriguing as it is uncertain; at the very least, whoever emerges projects as an upgrade over the departing Zach Calzada. Even if they're still a year or two away from paydirt, the raw material is undeniably in place. For now, settling on a viable QB and sustaining forward momentum in Year 5 will go a long way toward reassuring the high rollers that the best is still to come.

AINIAS SMITH

A. Smith: Tim Umphrey; N. Smith: Paul Abell

4 Georgia: Beast of the East

There are plenty of ways to measure Georgia's ascent under Kirby Smart, from the glut of five-star recruits on the roster to the end, finally, of UGA's notorious national championship drought. The starkest effect, however, has arguably been within Georgia's own division: Since 2017, the Bulldogs are 27–2 against the rest of the SEC East, by scores that reflect an even wider gap than the record implies. Only one of those wins was decided by single digits, and in 2021, Georgia's average margin of victory in division play was an embarrassing 32.3 points per game.

NOLAN SMITH

At some point, that state of affairs says as much about the rest of the division as it does about the team at the top. While the Dawgs have thrived, their old rivals for East dominance, Florida and Tennessee, have languished in various stages of rebuilding. With the abrupt end of the Dan Mullen era in Gainesville, the Gators and Vols are both on their fourth head coach in 10 years, a cycle of hope and collapse that has yielded some fleeting success (see Florida's last division title in 2020) but overall amounts to a lost decade. The division upstart, Kentucky, has stabilized into a reliable winner under Mark Stoops but has yet to come close to the top of the standings, finishing at least two games behind Georgia each of the past five years; ditto South Carolina and Missouri, both well removed from their last winning conference records. Meanwhile, Smart keeps stacking blue-chip recruiting classes in Athens, and the talent deficit just keeps getting deeper.

There are glimmers of hope this fall, if you squint. Tennessee improved in 2021 under first-year head coach Josh Heupel and boasts the league's best returning pass-catch combo in Hendon Hooker and Cedric Tillman. Kentucky won 10 games and found a keeper behind center in Will Levis. South Carolina finished on a high note and landed a potentially transformative talent in Spencer Rattler. Florida is back on the upswing under incoming coach Billy Napier, who won big at his last stop and inherited from Mullen the division's deepest talent base outside of Georgia's. All four have legitimate Top 25 aspirations, and UGA has legitimate question marks across the lineup following an exodus of star power from last year's title run. But for the moment, the Dawgs' grip on the East is secure.

5 Rebel Reinforcements

The 2021 campaign was a banner year for Ole Miss, yielding 10 wins and a trip to the Sugar Bowl. Instead of joyously ringing in the New Year, though, the Rebels' Jan. 1 loss to Baylor felt more like the clock striking midnight. The offseason exodus from Oxford included not only face-of-the-program QB Matt Corral, but also the top three running backs, top three receivers, eight of the top 12 tacklers on defense, All-SEC edge rusher Sam Williams and both coordinators, for good measure. No other SEC outfit suffered heavier losses.

So maybe it shouldn't come as any surprise that no other outfit went harder in the transfer portal, either. With holes to fill across the lineup, Lane Kiffin went all-in on a transfer haul that delivered on quality and quantity, featuring a dozen potential starters. QB Jaxson Dart (USC) was one of the most coveted signal-callers on the market. RB Zach Evans (TCU) is a former five-star recruit who averaged 7.3 yards per carry as a Horned Frog. WRs Jordan Watkins (Louisville) and Malik Heath (Mississippi State) are proven targets; ditto TE Michael Trigg (USC), who was on pace for a breakthrough freshman campaign in 2021 before it was cut short by injury. OT Mason Brooks (WKU), LB Troy Brown (Central Michigan) and DB Isheem Young (Iowa State) each earned all-conference honors at their

JAXSON DART

previous stops. DE Jared Ivey (Georgia Tech) and DB Ladarius Tennison (Auburn) are former four-stars with starting experience in the Power 5.

Are the reinforcements enough to keep Ole Miss in the top half of a cutthroat SEC West? That will depend largely on Dart, who for all the hype still arrives with more promise than proof, and how well he clicks with new OC Charlie Weis Jr. (Yes, we are all getting that old.) But if he manages to pick up anywhere near where Corral left off, there's no reason the Rebels can't find themselves back in the New Year's Six hunt well into November.

6 Harsin on the Hot Seat

Bryan Harsin's debut as Auburn's head coach was going smoothly for a while, until suddenly it very much was not. On Nov. 1, the Tigers were 6–2, ranked No. 12 in the AP poll and in the thick of the SEC West race. By year's end, they were licking their wounds, losers of five straight to finish 6–7 — Auburn's first losing record since 2012. In four of those five losses, the Tigers blew a fourth-quarter lead, including a record-breaking collapse against Mississippi State (the Bulldogs' rally from a 28–3 deficit was the biggest comeback in school history) and, worst of all, a gut-wrenching, four-overtime loss in the Iron Bowl.

BRYAN HARSIN

The chilly vibes carried over into the offseason. Defensive coordinator Derek Mason left for the same title and less money at Oklahoma State; on the other side of the ball, incoming OC Austin Davis abruptly bailed out for undisclosed reasons after just a few weeks on the job. More than a dozen players portaled out, including long-tenured quarterback Bo Nix, leaving one of the conference's shakiest QB situations in his wake. In the process, several of the departures criticized Harsin's coaching style, prompting an internal investigation that put his status officially in limbo while he was out of the country on vacation, unsure whether he'd still have a job when he got back. He did, but with the clear message that patience in Year 2 is running out.

Above all, that means settling on a long-term solution behind center. The Tigers brought in two transfer options, Zach Calzada and Robby Ashford, to compete with holdover T.J. Finley, who inspired little confidence after replacing an injured Nix late last year. Auburn being Auburn, there is no shortage of talent elsewhere if the most important piece falls into place, headlined by workhorse RB Tank Bigsby and defensive lineman Colby Wooden. But then, Auburn being Auburn, the margin between winning big and getting shown the door is always a moving target.

7 Brian Kelly and LSU: The SEC'S Odd Couple

It's an old cliché that teams that just dumped their last coach tend to fall for his opposite on the rebound, and at first glance it's hard to imagine a more dramatic culture shock than LSU replacing Ed Orgeron with Brian Kelly. Coach O, with his unrefined Cajun growl of a voice, was Louisiana to the bone. Kelly, who arrived in December off a 12-year tenure at Notre Dame, is a media-savvy Massachusetts native who has spent his entire career in the Midwest; it's possible he's never laid eyes on a crawfish, much less attempted to eat one. After his first public appearance, video of Kelly slipping into a dubious Southern drawl at a Tiger basketball game went viral to widespread mockery.

Of course, he was hired to win football games, not to be a cultural ambassador, and on that front, his track record speaks for itself. Prior to landing in South Bend, Kelly's résumé included a pair of national titles at Division II Grand Valley State and conference crowns at Cincinnati and Central Michigan. At Notre Dame, he coached in and won more games than anyone in school history — surpassing Rockne, Leahy, Parseghian and Holtz — while leading the Irish to the BCS National Championship Game in 2012 and playoff bids in 2018 and '20. The only box he hasn't ticked is the big one. By making the leap to LSU, a program with national titles under each of the last three guys to hold the job, he's aiming to take that last, career-defining step.

He may not have to wait as long for his shot as LSU's mediocre record the past two years suggests, either. As quickly as the previous regime unraveled, Orgeron never lost his mojo as a recruiter, leaving a roster brimming with the usual talent — especially at wide receiver, where 2021 injury casualty Kayshon Boutte will rejoin the fold, and on the defensive line. The biggest question mark, quarterback, got a surprising answer in the spring with a commitment from Arizona State transfer Jayden Daniels, a former blue-chip prospect who started 29 games at ASU. If the personnel clicks, the Tigers should be relevant again very quickly, and Kelly can use whatever accent he wants.

8 Arkansas: Hogs Hope to Shatter Their Ceiling

By all accounts, Arkansas' decision to hire Sam Pittman in December 2019 was one of the most unlikely SEC coaching moves in recent memory. The Razorbacks, losers of 19 straight in conference play, were at rock bottom. At 58, Pittman was a journeyman O-line coach with no experience as a head coach or coordinator above the junior college level, whose main selling point was his enthusiasm as a recruiter. He wasn't the first choice for the rebuilding job, or the second, or possibly even the third.

Two years in, though, Pittman is on the verge of becoming an Ozark institution. After a tentative step forward in 2020, the 2021 Hogs broke through with wins over Texas, Texas A&M, LSU and Penn State en route to a 9–4 finish, throwing a late-season scare into Alabama along the way. They briefly cracked the top 10 in the AP poll, rising as high as eighth on

Dart: AP Photo/Rogelio V. Solis; Harsin: Paul Abell

ARKANSAS RAZORBACKS

the strength of a 4–0 start, and closed with Arkansas' best poll finish (21st) in a decade. The "rebuilding" phase of the project went in the books as a smashing success.

Now, the big question in Year 3: Is that as good as it gets? If a dark horse run in the West is more than a pipe dream, it's mainly due to the presence of redshirt junior QB KJ Jefferson, an enormous athlete with the potential to match his 6'3", 245-pound frame. Raw as he often was in his first season as a starter, Jefferson also inspired visions of big things to come as he grows into his talent. Just how close he comes to his ceiling will be the biggest variable in determining how high the Razorbacks can set theirs.

9 South Carolina: Beamer Raises the Bar

Shane Beamer's debut campaign at South Carolina was a classic "Year 0" situation: No pressure in terms of wins and losses, only that the team play hard and exhibit some glimmers of hope for the future along the way. On those terms, mission accomplished. With late-season upsets over Florida, Auburn and North Carolina, the Gamecocks eked out their first winning record since 2018, and by the end the 44-year-old Beamer looked like a guy enjoying every second of it. He capped a Duke's Mayo Bowl victory over UNC by mugging post-game with the team's live rooster mascot, Sir Big Spur IV, and agreeing to get slimed by a celebratory bucket full of actual mayonnaise.

So much for the honeymoon. Bring on the expectations in Year 2, beginning and ending with Spencer Rattler. Although his Oklahoma tenure ended on the bench, Rattler remains a legitimate five-star talent — a major coup for a program that hasn't had a quarterback drafted in any round since 1990 (Todd Ellis), and which has struggled with stability at the position for most of the past decade. In addition to Rattler, Carolina also landed transfers at running back (Christian Beal-Smith and Lovasea Carroll from Wake Forest and Georgia, respectively), wide receiver (Antwane Wells Jr., an FCS All-American at James Madison) and tight end (Austin Stogner, Rattler's former teammate at Oklahoma) to bring some juice to one of the league's lowest-octane offenses.

It shouldn't take long to get a sense of where the hype ends and reality begins, and a glimpse at the schedule is all you need to know that an improved product on the field doesn't necessarily guarantee a better record in the end. Still, if the Gamecocks can't make a move in a relatively wide-open division behind Georgia, in what's likely to be Rattler's only season in garnet and black, it will go down as a sorely missed opportunity.

10 Spring Cleaning at Vanderbilt

Few programs in America have as much experience as a doormat as Vanderbilt, which has managed a grand total of three winning campaigns in the past 40 years. Even by Vandy standards, though, the past few years have been grim. The 2020 team turned in the first winless campaign in school history vs. an SEC-only schedule; the 2021 edition under first-year head coach Clark Lea wasn't much better, struggling to a 2–10 finish with narrow non-conference wins over Colorado State and UConn decided on last-minute field goals. Entering Year 2 under Lea, the Commodores are riding a 21-game SEC losing streak with no momentum and no end in sight.

CLARK LEA

Housecleaning began on the sideline, where Lea brought in five new assistants and promoted two holdovers from last year's staff to coordinators. He also put incumbent quarterbacks Ken Seals and Mike Wright on notice by signing three QBs in the incoming recruiting class, one of whom, AJ Swann, enrolled early to push the vets in the spring. Otherwise, Lea is banking on continuity. The Dores largely shunned the transfer portal in favor of a lineup that returns most of last year's main contributors, including their most productive player on either side of the ball, senior linebacker Anfernee Orji. Best-case scenario: A more mature team is competitive enough in enough games to avoid another goose egg in the standings. Worst-case, well, at least there's nowhere to go but up.

Arkansas: Jason Parkhurst; Lea: Tom DiPace

FLORIDA GATORS

National Forecast: 33 • SEC East Prediction: 4 • Projected Record: 7-5, 4-4 SEC

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Billy Napier
RECORD AT SCHOOL: First Season
CAREER RECORD: 40-12 (4 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Rob Sale
DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Patrick Toney, Sean Spencer
LOCATION: Gainesville, FL
STADIUM: Ben Hill Griffin Stadium (88,548)

KEY GATORS

ANTHONY RICHARDSON, QB The 6'4", 237-pound sophomore has game-changing explosiveness, highlighted by six scoring plays of 30 yards or longer, but he needs to display consistency and durability.

VENTRELL MILLER, LB Led the 2020 Gators with 86 tackles (7.5 for a loss) during a breakout season, but a Week 1 shoulder injury ended Miller's 2021 season and gutted the defense.

BRENTON COX JR., LB A foot injury limited Cox, who still recorded 14.5 tackles for a loss and 12 QB hurries and returns for a fifth season with his sights on Alex Brown's sack record (13 in 1999).

KEY LOSSES

KAIIR ELAM, CB Elam totaled 18 passes defensed the past two seasons before he left school early with first-round NFL draft buzz.

DAMEON PIERCE, RB With 13 touchdowns and an average of 5.7 yards on 100 carries, Pierce made the most of his opportunities despite former head coach Dan Mullen's committee approach.

ZACHARY CARTER, DE Carter had 27.5 tackles for a loss his final three seasons, highlighted by eight sacks in 2021 as leader of the front seven.

THE VERDICT

Billy Napier won't fix everything that ails Florida, but a program just one year removed from the SEC title game is hardly devoid of talent. The first task for Napier is to develop quarterback Anthony Richardson. The ultra-talented sophomore averaged 8.1 yards per snap last year but is a work in progress as a passer. The second area of concern for the new staff rests with a defense that allowed 26.8 points a game. Improvement should be noticeable, but the Gators are still a long ways behind Georgia in the East.

POSTSEASON: Gator Bowl vs. Pittsburgh

BETTORS' BOX

FLORIDA FUTURES

ODDS TO WIN NATIONAL TITLE: 100/1
ODDS TO WIN SEC: 50/1
ODDS TO WIN SEC EAST: 20/1
SEASON WIN O/U: 7 (Over -120)
HEISMAN CONTENDER: QB Anthony Richardson (75/1)
BETTORS' BYTE: Gators have been home underdogs only eight times since 2015; they're 6-2 ATS in that role, including a cover vs Alabama in 2021.

Information provided by the Bet the Board staff

Billy Napier coached at Clemson during Dabo Swinney's early struggles and joined Nick Saban's Alabama juggernaut as it took full flight. At Florida, Napier will apply what he learned at the two winningest programs since 2010 — the year the Gators' decline began.

Napier will put his own stamp on the Gators, using the personal touch and attention to detail that turned Louisiana into Top 25 material. Since his arrival, Napier has surrounded himself with a massive, well-researched staff, instilled structure into his players' routines and scrutinized every aspect of a program coming off a six-win season following three straight New Year's Six bowl appearances under Dan Mullen.

Napier's ability to orchestrate and delegate during daily meetings astonishes a staff totaling more than 60. "It might be 15 minutes have passed and he's given out enough work for a month-and-a-half," says director of football operations Joshua Thompson. "He's that thorough."

Little things, including improved parking and better food, loom large with players. "It's easy to go out and compete when you've got somebody that cares about you," defensive back Tre'Vez Johnson says.

Yet, Napier is demanding of his players and coaches — and determined to build a winner. The 42-year-old is also candid about Florida's roster, saying he plans to be "very aggressive" signing transfers. "We need players," Napier says.

One thing Napier's Gators will not need: a plan.

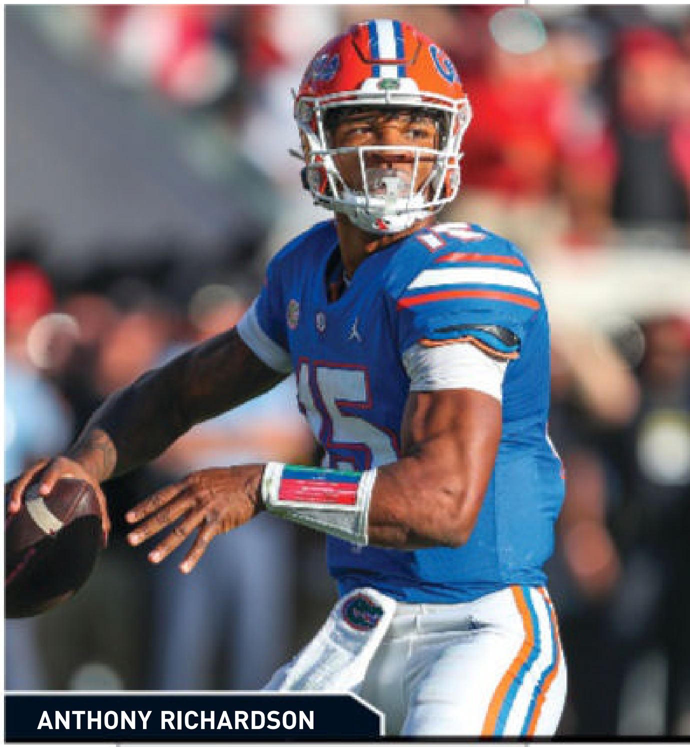
OFFENSE Quarterback Anthony Richardson was scintillating in small doses as a backup. The gifted redshirt sophomore now will shoulder the offensive load. To capitalize on his explosive playmaking skills, the 6'4", 237-pounder must display better durability and decision-making or Ohio State transfer Jack Miller III could supplant him.

Whoever the quarterback is, the Gators must develop a supporting cast. Returning players scored just 13 of the 2021 team's 53 touchdowns, three by Richardson.

Options abound at running back. Veteran Nay'Quan Wright is poised to start but was injured much of spring, when physical Louisiana transfer Montrell Johnson stood out. Johnson rushed for 838 yards and 12 scores as a freshman in 2021. Little-used former five-star recruits Lorenzo Lingard and Demarckus Bowman continue to bewilder.

Junior Justin Shorter's 41 receptions for 550 yards and three scores are highs among a group of pass-catchers that has proven pedestrian. Xzavier Henderson, a former top-75 recruit, has three scores in two seasons. Shorter and Henderson have struggled to get open. Given slot receiver Trent Whittemore's propensity for injury, keep an eye on sophomore Daejon Reynolds. Outside of junior Keon Zipperer (25 receptions in three seasons), Florida tight ends have not caught a college pass.

Napier's use of two offensive line coaches gives proper attention to a long-standing issue — a lack of physicality and blown assignments up front. The return of


ANTHONY RICHARDSON

Tom DiPace

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Utah
Sept. 10	Kentucky
Sept. 17	USF
Sept. 24	at Tennessee
Oct. 1	Eastern Washington
Oct. 8	Missouri
Oct. 15	LSU
Oct. 29	vs. Georgia #
Nov. 5	at Texas A&M
Nov. 12	South Carolina
Nov. 19	at Vanderbilt
Nov. 25	at Florida State

#Jacksonville, FL

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 6-7, 2-6 SEC

Sept. 4	Florida Atlantic	W	35-14
Sept. 11	at USF	W	42-20
Sept. 18	Alabama	L	29-31
Sept. 25	Tennessee	W	38-14
Oct. 2	at Kentucky	L	13-20
Oct. 9	Vanderbilt	W	42-0
Oct. 16	at LSU	L	42-49
Oct. 30	vs. Georgia #	L	7-34
Nov. 6	at South Carolina	L	17-40
Nov. 13	Samford	W	70-52
Nov. 20	at Missouri (ot)	L	23-24
Nov. 27	Florida State	W	24-21
Dec. 23	vs. UCF %	L	17-29

#Jacksonville %Gasparilla Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	30.7 ppg	7	49
Rushing	208.7 ypg	4	23
Passing	254.2 ypg	6	46
Total	462.8 ypg	4	15
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	26.8 ppg	11	73
Rushing	163.9 ypg	10	85
Passing	203.9 ypg	4	25
Total	367.8 ypg	8	51
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
-8	-0.62	13	116

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	29.1	60
Defense	28.7	62
Margin	+0.4	58
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	46.7%	27
Defense	40.9%	53
Margin	+5.8%	33
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	6.7	12
Defense	5.5	56
Margin	+1.2	20
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.4	43
Defense	4.0	51
Margin	+0.4	50
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	-2.0	98
Actual	-8	115
Margin	-6.0	115

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

35.2%

Florida's pass defense ranked 14th in the nation in efficiency, holding opponents to a 35.2 percent success rate. The Gators forced seven interceptions and 21 sacks and allowed only 15 touchdowns through the air all season.

0.056

Opponents averaged 0.056 EPA/rush against Florida (74th in FBS) and a 39.4 percent success rate (66th). The Gators allowed 61 rushes of 10-plus yards.

48.6%

On offense, Florida had quality possessions at a rate of 48.6 percent, 67th in the nation.

three starters (left tackle Richard Gouraige, left guard Ethan White, center Kingsley Eguakun), the addition of Louisiana transfer guard O'Cyrus Torrence and experienced depth give coaches something to work with.

DEFENSE Florida went from historically bad in 2020 to extremely average in 2021. To become elite again is a big ask. Improvement certainly is possible, if not imperative. Proven depth is a concern. Pass rusher Brenton Cox Jr. has the skills to produce double-digit sacks, but there's no threat on the other side unless Princely Umanmielen emerges. Inside, Gervon Dexter is poised to make major strides during his third season. Who lines up beside him is anyone's guess.

Inside linebacker Ventrell Miller's return from a shoulder injury for a sixth season provides proven production (team-high 86 stops in 2020). Fifth-year senior Amari Burney brings experience. Diwun Black, a 2019 signee forced to go the juco route, is a former high school defensive back whose playmaking skills shined in spring.

The Gators' growth in the secondary is critical. Sophomore cornerback Jason Marshall Jr. could be special, while Georgia transfer Jalen Kimber, a redshirt sophomore recovering from shoulder surgery, could be a steal. At safety, fifth-year senior Trey Dean III is a three-year starter, but sophomore Rashad Torrence II is more dependable and four-star recruit Kamari Wilson potentially more impactful. Johnson has taken his lumps for two seasons yet remains confident he can generate the big plays that the STAR position demands.

SPECIALISTS Jeremy Crawshaw averaged 44.1 yards as a freshman to continue Florida's tradition of exceptional punters. Placekicker was another story. Florida hopes incoming freshman Trey Smack can step in. During the past decade, the return game rarely has been the threat it was when Florida ruled the SEC. A team expected to have little margin for error could use a boost from the game's third phase.

FINAL ANALYSIS Before addressing X's and O's, Napier wanted the Gators to be on their p's and q's to improve time management, team bonding and offseason conditioning. Talent acquisition also topped the offseason to-do list. A daunting schedule features Utah, Kentucky and Tennessee in September and a three-game stretch of LSU, Georgia and Texas A&M. A challenging season is ahead, but the Gators are once again focused on a better future.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	3	Xzavier Henderson (So.)	82	Ja'Markis Weston (So.)
WR	**14**	**Trent Whittemore (So.)**	81	Daejon Reynolds (Fr.)
WR	**4**	**Justin Shorter (Jr.)**	88	Marcus Burke (Fr.)
LT	**76**	**Richard Gouraige (Jr.)**	58	Austin Barber (Fr.)
LG	**77**	**Ethan White (Jr.)**	64	Riley Simonds (So.)
C	**65**	**Kingsley Eguakun (So.)**	67	Richie Leonard (So.)
RG	54	O'Cyrus Torrence (Jr.)	**72**	**Josh Braun (So.)**
RT	70	Michael Tarquin (So.)	75	Kamryn Waites (Fr.)
TE	9	Keon Zipperer (Jr.)	84	Nick Elksnis (Fr.)
QB	15	Anthony Richardson (So.)	10	Jack Miller III (Fr.)
RB	6	Nay'Quan Wright (So.)	2	Montrell Johnson (So.)

DEFENSE (8) Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	33	Princely Umanmielen (So.)	18	Dante Zanders (Jr.)
NT	92	Jalen Lee (So.)	21	Desmond Watson (So.)
DT	**9**	**Gervon Dexter (So.)**	7	Chris McClellan (Fr.)
JACK	**1**	**Brenton Cox Jr. (Jr.)**	52	Antwaun Powell-Ryland Jr. (So.)
LB	**51**	**Ventrell Miller (Sr.)**	15	Derek Wingo (So.)
LB	2	Amari Burney (Sr.)	30	Diwun Black (Jr.)
CB	**24**	**Avery Helm (So.)**	23	Jaydon Hill (So.)
CB	**3**	**Jason Marshall Jr. (So.)**	8	Jalen Kimber (So.)
STAR	**16**	**Tre'Vez Johnson (So.)**	27	Jadarrius Perkins (Jr.)
S	**0**	**Trey Dean III (Sr.)**	5	Kamari Wilson (Fr.)
S	**22**	**Rashad Torrence II (So.)**	20	Corey Collier Jr. (Fr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K		Trey Smack (Fr.)	**KR**	23	Demarkcus Bowman (So.)
P	26	Jeremy Crawshaw (So.)	**PR**	39	Fenley Graham Jr. (So.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	**ATT**	**COMP**	**YDS**	**TD**	**INT**
Emory Jones	346	224	2,734	19	13
Anthony Richardson	**64**	**38**	**529**	**6**	**5**
Trent Whittemore	**4**	**3**	**41**	**2**	**0**
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Emory Jones	143	758	5.3	4	
Dameon Pierce	100	574	5.7	13	
Malik Davis	92	487	5.3	5	
Anthony Richardson	**51**	**401**	**7.9**	**3**	
Nay'Quan Wright	**76**	**326**	**4.3**	**1**	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Jacob Copeland	41	642	15.7	4	
Justin Shorter	**41**	**550**	**13.4**	**3**	
Kemore Gamble	31	414	13.4	4	
Xzavier Henderson	**26**	**277**	**10.7**	**2**	
Rick Wells	24	259	10.8	3	

KICKING: **Chris Howard, 7-9 FGs, 52 pts.**
TACKLES: **Trey Dean III, 92;** Mohamoud Diabate, 89
SACKS: **Brenton Cox Jr., 8.5**
INTERCEPTIONS: **Rashad Torrence II, 3**

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE GATORS

Opposing Coaches Size Up Florida

"Billy Napier was a great hire for these guys, but when you dig in and start looking at his history, it clashes with what we expect Florida to look like, and maybe with what their fans demand. Billy and [OC] Rob [Sale] didn't win on spread/tempo at Louisiana. Look at the tape. They're gonna come in and get big and mean and try to run first. They're creative and modern, but it's built on some really old-school stuff. How will that play when everyone wants Steve Spurrier? ... In terms of pure talent, the roster is probably the fourth best in the East and lower than that in the West. But they didn't have much to start with at Louisiana, either. The really unique thing about Napier is that he's always unafraid to do the necessary, ugly football stuff that isn't exciting, but this is a higher platform than he's ever been on as a head coach. … They're going to need a deep group at running back, and they're going to need a better, different level of play on the O-line for what they want to do. … On defense, it's less about personnel and more about a culture change. They never lacked for talented guys with Todd Grantham; it was just that the scheme ended up hurting them more than the execution. … No one thinks they're going suddenly right the ship and close that gap with Georgia. You should look for a more settled QB situation, better turnover ratio and winning ugly at first."

OUTSIDE THE HUDDLE

CALL TO ARMS Billy Napier vowed to put together "an army of people" and hire an unprecedented support staff. The Gators are competing behind the scenes like never before. Florida's staff swelled to more than 60. Napier's few dozen analysts at Louisiana included volunteers and even some local high schoolers. AD Scott Stricklin committed $5 million to Napier's approach. Winning has a price.

PORTAL POWER Florida's first spring scrimmage showcased an alarming lack of personnel. Napier said he was unable to call 25 to 30 plays he would have with a deep, experienced roster. Finding players to supplement program cornerstones like pass rusher Brenton Cox Jr. was offseason priority No. 1. The portal makes it easier than ever. Napier anticipates the number of transfers to reach "double digits."

BRENTON COX JR.

MOUNT WATSON Desmond Watson registered seven tackles in 13 appearances as a freshman. Yet few Gators generate as much fascination as the 6'5", 415-pound sophomore. Watson, who arrived at 440 pounds, is pushing to slim down to around 375. Even so, he can carry his heft surprisingly well. Watson also can push some weight — he reportedly bench-pressed an astonishing 560 pounds. "He's big and he can move," marvels fellow defensive tackle Gervon Dexter. "Nobody should be able to block him."

DOUBLING DOWN If two heads are better than one, a much-maligned offensive line is in good hands. Napier's plan to call plays and coach quarterbacks freed up a spot for a second O-line coach, a rarity at the college level. Sharing duties are Rob Sale, a former LSU standout, and Darnell Stapleton, a member of the 2008 Super Bowl champion Pittsburgh Steelers. With two pairs of eyes and voices giving them extra attention and instruction, the Gators' big uglies might not be as tough to watch.

MAY THE FORCE BE WITH YOU Cornerbacks coach Corey Raymond was among Napier's first hires, and perhaps his best. The 52-year-old's reputation, results and relationships generate excitement among players and coaches. Co-defensive coordinator Sean Spencer called Raymond, "the Yoda of DBs." During his time at LSU (2012-21), Raymond lured future stars Jamal Adams, Derek Stingley Jr., Eli Ricks and Kristian Fulton. Once in the fold, players receive tough love and a master class from Raymond, a six-year NFL veteran. "It's about learning the ins and outs of the position," he says. "I'm hard to get along with out there on the field."

RISING STAR

Sophomore **JASON MARSHALL JR.** shook off early struggles and began to show why he was the team's only five-star recruit in the 2021 class. CB guru Corey Raymond arrives from LSU aiming to elevate a player with the size (6'0", 192) and ball skills to anchor Florida's secondary.

2022 FLORIDA ROSTER

QUARTERBACKS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
18 Anders, Jack	6-1/203	So.	Germantown, MD
13 Engel, Kyle	6-0/190	So.	Fort Lauderdale, FL
11 Kitna, Jalen	6-4/205	Fr.	Tacoma, WA
10 Miller III, Jack	6-3/215	Fr.	Scottsdale, AZ
15 Richardson, Anthony	6-4/237	So.	Gainesville, FL

RUNNING BACKS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
36 Barnes, Cornelius	6-0/171	Fr.	Tallahassee, FL
23 Bowman, Demarkcus	5-10/183	So.	Lakeland, FL
2 Johnson, Montrell	5-11/210	So.	New Orleans, LA
38 Joseph, Carlson	5-10/194	Fr.	Pompano Beach, FL
21 Lingard, Lorenzo	6-0/205	Jr.	Orange City, FL
40 Ortiz, Gabriel	5-11/185	Fr.	Pembroke Pines, FL
6 Wright, Nay'Quan	5-9/201	So.	Miami Gardens, FL

RECEIVERS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
88 Burke, Marcus	6-4/183	Fr.	Jacksonville, FL
33 Cross, Daniel	6-0/175	Jr.	Orlando, FL
41 Curtis, Justin	5-11/195	Sr.	Bradenton, FL
0 Fraziars, Ja'Quavion	6-3/212	So.	Dunnellon, FL
3 Henderson, Xzavier	6-3/193	So.	Miami, FL
22 Jackson, Kahleil	6-3/213	Fr.	Hawthorne, FL
86 Pouncey, Jordan	6-1/210	Sr.	Winter Park, FL
81 Reynolds, Daejon	6-2/208	So.	Springfield, IL
35 Sawyer, William	6-1/186	So.	Gainesville, FL
4 Shorter, Justin	6-5/228	Jr.	Monmouth Junction, NJ
30 Spierto, Taylor	5-11/206	Fr.	Franklin, TN
82 Weston, Ja'Markis	6-3/216	So.	Clewiston, FL
14 Whittemore, Trent	6-4/210	So.	Gainesville, FL

TIGHT ENDS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
84 Elksnis, Nick	6-6/232	Fr.	Jacksonville, FL
87 Odom, Jonathan	6-5/245	So.	Tampa, FL
80 Wilcox, Gage	6-4/241	Fr.	Tampa, FL
9 Zipperer, Keon	6-3/234	Jr.	Lakeland, FL

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
58 Barber, Austin	6-6/311	Fr.	Jacksonville, FL
50 Boateng, Kaleb	6-4/287	Jr.	Fort Lauderdale, FL
72 Braun, Josh	6-6/357	So.	Live Oak, FL
79 Clem, Hayden	6-2/292	Fr.	Maitland, FL
65 Eguakun, Kingsley	6-4/305	So.	Jacksonville, FL
76 Gouraige, Richard	6-5/310	Jr.	Tampa, FL
74 Harrod, Will	6-5/333	So.	Clinton, MD
67 Leonard, Richie	6-2/315	So.	Cocoa, FL
78 Mugharbil, Yousef	6-4/311	Fr.	Murphy, NC
73 Pitts, Mark	6-6/322	So.	Gainesville, FL
64 Simonds, Riley	6-3/301	So.	Buford, GA
66 Slaughter, Jake	6-5/302	Fr.	Sparr, FL
70 Tarquin, Michael	6-5/301	So.	Ocala, FL
54 Torrence, O'Cyrus	6-5/335	Jr.	Greensburg, LA
75 Waites, Kamryn	6-8/358	Fr.	Dallas, TX
77 White, Ethan	6-5/334	Jr.	Clearwater, FL

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
91 Boone, Justus	6-4/245	Fr.	Sumter, SC
9 Dexter, Gervon	6-6/313	So.	Lake Wales, FL
66 Humphries, Jaelin	6-3/330	So.	Lawrenceville, GA
92 Lee, Jalen	6-2/305	So.	Watson, LA
7 McClellan, Chris	6-3/305	Fr.	Owasso, OK
97 McDowell, Griffin	6-4/283	Jr.	Leesburg, GA
94 Sapp, Tyreak	6-2/264	Fr.	Fort Lauderdale, FL
90 Thomas Jr., Chris	6-5/309	Fr.	Tallahassee, FL
33 Umanmielen, Princely	6-4/259	So.	Manor, TX
21 Watson, Desmond	6-5/415	So.	Plant City, FL
18 Zanders, Dante	6-5/261	Jr.	Boca Raton, FL

LINEBACKERS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
30 Black, Diwun	6-3/221	Jr.	Forest, MS
36 Borders, Chief	6-4/232	Fr.	Chicago, IL
2 Burney, Amari	6-2/236	Sr.	St. Petersburg, FL
1 Cox Jr., Brenton	6-4/253	Jr.	Stockbridge, GA
48 Keeter, Noah	6-5/216	So.	Gainesville, FL
51 Miller, Ventrell	6-1/228	Sr.	Lakeland, FL
47 Pelic, Justin	5-11/213	So.	Mount Pleasant, SC
52 Powell-Ryland, Antwaun	6-2/245	So.	Portsmouth, VA
4 Reese, David	6-2/236	Jr.	Fort Pierce, FL
99 Summerall III, Lloyd	6-5/236	So.	Lakeland, FL
17 Williams, Scooby	6-2/232	Fr.	Birmingham, AL
15 Wingo, Derek	6-1/225	So.	Fort Lauderdale, FL

DEFENSIVE BACKS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
20 Collier Jr., Corey	6-1/179	Fr.	Miami, FL
0 Dean III, Trey	6-3/201	Sr.	Hampton, GA
39 Graham Jr., Fenley	5-9/166	So.	Lakeland, FL
24 Helm, Avery	6-1/174	So.	Missouri City, TX
23 Hill, Jaydon	6-0/193	So.	Huntsville, AL
16 Johnson, Tre'Vez	5-11/192	So.	Jacksonville, FL
8 Kimber, Jalen	6-0/170	So.	Mansfield, TX
3 Marshall Jr., Jason	6-0/192	So.	Miami, FL
32 McDaniel, Mordecai	6-1/194	So.	Washington, DC
13 McMillon, Donovan	6-1/200	So.	McMurray, PA
35 Mitchell, Dakota	5-11/171	Fr.	Winter Park, FL
28 Moore, Devin	6-2/190	Fr.	Naples, FL
27 Perkins, Jadarrius	6-1/185	Jr.	Hattiesburg, MS
25 Pouncey, Ethan	6-1/166	So.	Winter Park, FL
38 Rackley, Cahron	5-10/189	Fr.	Miami, FL
22 Torrence II, Rashad	6-0/197	So.	Atlanta, GA
26 Wilcoxson, Kamar	6-1/183	Fr.	Lithonia, GA
5 Wilson, Kamari	6-0/201	Fr.	Fort Pierce, FL
31 Young, Jordan	6-0/188	Fr.	Tampa, FL

SPECIALISTS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
46 Brady, John (P)	5-11/189	So.	Tallahassee, FL
26 Crawshaw, Jeremy (P)	6-4/188	So.	New South Wales, Aus.
96 Freeman, Travis (K)	5-11/203	So.	Lakewood Ranch, FL
71 Howard, Chris (K)	6-1/211	Sr.	Ponte Vedra Beach, FL
49 Mihalek, Adam (K)	6-2/193	Fr.	Tampa, FL
45 Ortiz, Marco (LS)	6-4/235	Jr.	Richmond, VA
42 Underwood, Rocco (LS)	6-3/227	Fr.	Lake Mary, FL
40 Watkins, Jacob (P)	6-0/197	Sr.	Gainesville, FL
37 Waxman, Tyler (P)	5-9/171	So.	Pembroke Pines, FL
53 Whitfield, Chase (LS)	6-0/240	So.	Saint Cloud, FL

Tom DiPace

2022 **SIGNEES**

Within days of his early December arrival, Billy Napier received a refresher course on SEC recruiting and a clear view of the long road ahead.

Napier and his staff made waves in beating SEC heavyweights Georgia for safety Kamari Wilson and Alabama for linebacker Shemar James of Mobile. The two defenders also are Florida's only national top-100 recruits in the 2022 class.

Alabama signed 15 and Georgia 11, per 247Sports. Texas A&M's top-ranked class featured 18. The trio of schools secured commitments from 16 five-star players.

The Gators had none in the nation's 17th-ranked class, the program's lowest finish since 2015 — the year of another coaching transition.

Former head coach Dan Mullen signed some solid classes, including two inside the top 10. His final one ranked 12th.

Top SEC programs annually push for top-5 classes. Napier is well aware, having served five years at Alabama (2011, 2013-16). The 42-year-old was among Nick Saban's top recruiters in Tuscaloosa and will be heavily involved on the trail, unlike Mullen.

"I love recruiting," Napier says. "It's kind of the competition in the offseason."

In Gainesville, Napier put together a group of assistants and a robust recruiting apparatus to evaluate players, develop meaningful relationships and convince top talent to visit Gainesville. An $85 million, 140,000-square-foot standalone football complex set to open this summer will be a game-changer.

The Gators' 18 signees in 2022 feature just a handful of game-changers.

Surprisingly, Napier did not aggressively pursue three already committed — receivers Isaiah Bond, Jayden Gibson and Chandler Smith. Bond chose Alabama, Gibson went to Oklahoma and Smith is off to Georgia.

Of Florida's signees, Wilson, James, defensive tackle Chris McClellan and defensive back Devin Moore were highly coveted defenders; tailback Trevor Etienne is a top-15 prospect at his position and brother of former Clemson star and NFL first-round pick Travis Etienne; and offensive tackle-turned-developmental tight end Tony Livingston is a high school basketball star with size, athleticism and upside.

Livingston, like many in his class, needs to develop. In time, Napier expects to land the can't-miss impact players SEC powers are built on.

"We're excited about what's next," Napier says.

BY POSITION

Defensive Linemen	4
Offensive Linemen	3
Tight Ends	2
Defensive Backs	2
Athletes	2
Quarterbacks	1
Running Backs	1
Wide Receivers	1
Linebackers	1
Specialists	1

BY STATE

Florida	5
Texas	3
Alabama	2
Georgia	2
Oklahoma	2
California	1
Louisiana	1
Maryland	1
Washington	1

RECRUIT SPOTLIGHT

KAMARI WILSON

S • Fort Pierce, FL

Landing safety Kamari Wilson was a win in every sense for Billy Napier's Gators.

Wilson's signing supercharged a transition class in need of a boost on Early Signing Day. After making a coaching change, Florida had lost eight commitments.

The Under Armour All-American from South Florida immediately took it upon himself to serve as a pied piper for future players.

Wilson was unable to convince Louisiana safety Jacoby Mathews to join him at Texas A&M's expense. But whether or not Wilson's allure pays off down the road, he still gave his school a victory on multiple fronts.

The Gators beat rival Georgia for a top recruit and gained a foothold at in-state IMG Academy, a major talent producer in Bradenton — three hours from Gainesville. Under Mullen, Florida's inability to sign IMG players was a source of consternation among fans.

Perhaps most importantly, Wilson shapes up to be a playmaker Florida desperately needs on the back end of the defense. Safety play was alarmingly inconsistent the past three seasons as the Gators' defense fell from the ranks of the SEC's elite.

A top-50 prospect ranked third nationally at his position, the 6'0", 201-pound Wilson says his decision came down to Napier's vision for the Gators and the relationship with assistant coach Corey Raymond and defensive recruiting coordinator Jamar Chaney.

Wilson enrolled in January to get a head start on his college career. While he spent much of the spring rehabilitating an injury, Wilson made an impression during limited action.

"He's very explosive, very strong and interacts in every film meeting," fellow safety Rashad Torrence II says.

Name	Pos	Ht/Wt	Hometown	247	ESPN	Rivals	Nat. Rank
Arlis Boardingham	ATH	6-3/235	Van Nuys, CA	★★★	★★★★	★★★	488
Max Brown	QB	6-2/200	Tulsa, OK	★★★	★★★	★★	1,565
David Conner	OT	6-5/295	Atlanta, GA	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,023
Caleb Douglas	WR	6-3/191	Missouri City, TX	★★★	★★★★	★★★	465
Trevor Etienne	RB	5-9/217	Jennings, LA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	187
Jalen Farmer	OL	6-5/334	Covington, GA	★★★	★★★	★★★	693
Hayden Hansen	TE	6-6/256	Weatherford, TX	★★★	★★★	★★	1,869
Shemar James	LB	6-1/210	Mobile, AL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	67
Tony Livingston	TE	6-5/225	Tampa, FL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	306
Jamari Lyons	DL	6-4/298	Viera, FL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	374
Chris McClellan	DL	6-3/295	Owasso, OK	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	113
Miguel Mitchell	ATH	6-1/205	Oxford, AL	★★★	★★★	★★★	939
Devin Moore	S	6-2/190	Naples, FL	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	262
Jack Pyburn	EDGE	6-3/263	Jacksonville, FL	★★★	★★★	★★★★	439
Andrew Savaiinaea	DL	6-3/261	Graham, WA	★★★	★★★	★★★	677
Trey Smack	K	6-1/200	Severna Park, MD	★★★	★★★	★★	1,861
Christian Williams	OL	6-4/319	Missouri City, TX	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,223
Kamari Wilson	S	6-0/201	Fort Pierce, FL	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	44

GEORGIA BULLDOGS

National Forecast: 3 • SEC East Prediction: 1 • Projected Record: 12-1, 8-0 SEC

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Kirby Smart
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 66-15 (6 years)
CAREER RECORD: 66-15 (6 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Todd Monken
DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Will Muschamp, Glenn Schumann
LOCATION: Athens, GA
STADIUM: Sanford Stadium (92,746)

KEY BULLDOGS

STETSON BENNETT, QB The first quarterback to lead the Bulldogs to a national title since 1980 is coming off a season in which he averaged 10 yards per pass attempt and threw 29 touchdowns compared to just seven interceptions.

BROCK BOWERS, TE Bowers was a big-time target no matter who was behind center for the Bulldogs, evidenced by his 56 catches for 882 yards and 13 receiving touchdowns.

JALEN CARTER, DT The former five-star prospect is a forced to be reckoned with. He had 37 total tackles, 8.5 tackles for a loss and three sacks as a sophomore.

KEY LOSSES

JAMAREE SALYER, LT Salyer was rock-solid as a player and leader at the all-important LT position.

JORDAN DAVIS, DT His production and physicality will be missed, but not as much as his leadership.

NAKOBE DEAN, LB Dean played his best in the biggest moments for the Bulldogs and won the Butkus Award.

THE VERDICT

The Bulldogs are tied for the fewest returning starters (10) among teams in the SEC, but head coach Kirby Smart's team remains an overwhelming favorite in the East. Several key standouts departed from a historically dominant defense, yet the next wave of stars — headlined by Jalen Carter, Robert Beal Jr. and Nolan Smith — will keep this unit near the top of the SEC. Also, the offense can shoulder more of the load until the defense reloads in 2022. Despite the roster turnover, Georgia should be favored in all 12 of its regular-season games.

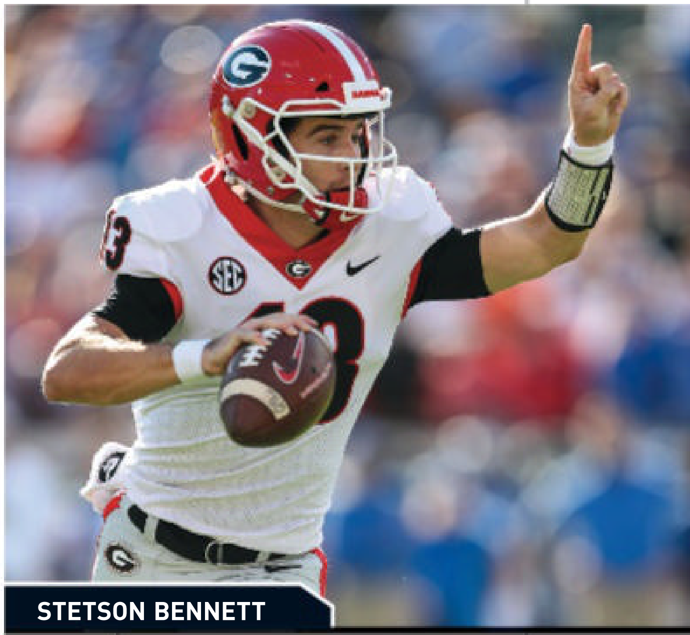
POSTSEASON: Fiesta Bowl vs. Ohio State

BETTORS' BOX

GEORGIA FUTURES

ODDS TO WIN NATIONAL TITLE: 4/1
ODDS TO WIN SEC: 2/1
ODDS TO WIN SEC EAST: -400
SEASON WIN O/U: 11 (Over -150)
HEISMAN CONTENDERS: TE Brock Bowers (250/1); QB Stetson Bennett (250/1); RB Kendall Milton (300/1); RB Kenny McIntosh (300/1)
BETTORS' BYTE: UGA is 17-6 (74%) ATS as an away favorite under Kirby Smart.

Information provided by the Bet the Board staff


STETSON BENNETT

Tom DiPace

The national championship hurdle has been cleared in Athens, Ga., and now a new challenge awaits — defending it. Georgia, in its seventh season under Kirby Smart, is as talented as ever, but getting back to, and winning, the big one will be extremely tough, as evidenced by the number of Bulldogs who were selected in the 2022 NFL Draft.

The offense returns a significant amount of production and experience, but the defense, a unit that was historically good in 2021, will aim to reload rather than rebuild. It'll take that and more if UGA has designs on going back-to-back.

OFFENSE As hard as it is to believe, Stetson Bennett is back for his sixth season at Georgia and his seventh of college ball after spending 2018 at Jones (Miss.) Community College. He was the subject of great scrutiny during the 2021 season, as fans and some media types were clamoring for former five-star prospect JT Daniels, who began the season as the starter. The switch never happened, and Daniels entered the transfer portal soon after the Bulldogs celebrated the big prize, ultimately landing at West Virginia.

Bennett has seen it all, and he silenced doubters with an Orange Bowl MVP performance in the College Football Playoff Semifinal vs. Michigan and a dazzling fourth-quarter showing in the national championship game win over Alabama. It's going to be tough to knock him off the starter's perch, but it's not Smart's style to have offensive coordinator Todd Monken just hand him the job. Bennett will be pushed by redshirt sophomore Carson Beck, redshirt freshman Brock Vandagriff and true freshman Gunner Stockton.

Georgia is known as "Running Back U" for a reason, and the ability to plug and play at that position is a major factor. Zamir White and James Cook are out, but Kenny McIntosh and Kendall Milton remain. Those two had fantastic springs, but bruising tailback Branson Robinson, a summer arrival, is worth monitoring.

The transfer portal hit UGA's pass-catching group hard at the end of the 2021 season when Jermaine Burton entered his name and then made his way to Alabama. Still, the Bulldogs have some ultra-talented players to lean on. That group includes the team's leading receiver in 2021, tight end Brock Bowers. He missed the spring with a shoulder injury but will be good to go in time for preseason camp.

One of the heroes of the National Championship Game, Adonai Mitchell, also returns, and the Bulldogs are hoping that they'll have the services of the freakishly gifted Arik Gilbert, a tight end/wide receiver combo athlete who missed the 2021 season for personal reasons. Gilbert went through spring practice with the team, and behind-the-scenes buzz suggests that he turned plenty of heads.

The offensive line brings back three of five starters from last season's squad. The guy expected to step in at left tackle, Broderick Jones, started four games and saw extensive action in two others, including the National Championship Game.

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Oregon #
Sept. 10	Samford
Sept. 17	at South Carolina
Sept. 24	Kent State
Oct. 1	at Missouri
Oct. 8	Auburn
Oct. 15	Vanderbilt
Oct. 29	vs. Florida %
Nov. 5	Tennessee
Nov. 12	at Mississippi State
Nov. 19	at Kentucky
Nov. 26	Georgia Tech

#Atlanta %Jacksonville, FL

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 14-1, 8-0 SEC

Sept. 4	vs. Clemson #	W	10-3
Sept. 11	UAB	W	56-7
Sept. 18	South Carolina	W	40-13
Sept. 25	at Vanderbilt	W	62-0
Oct. 2	Arkansas	W	37-0
Oct. 9	at Auburn	W	34-10
Oct. 16	Kentucky	W	30-13
Oct. 30	vs. Florida %	W	34-7
Nov. 6	Missouri	W	43-6
Nov. 13	at Tennessee	W	41-17
Nov. 20	Charleston Southern	W	56-7
Nov. 27	at Georgia Tech	W	45-0
Dec. 4	vs. Alabama &	L	24-41
Dec. 31	vs. Michigan +	W	34-11
Jan. 10	vs. Alabama $	W	33-18

#Charlotte, NC %Jacksonville & Atlanta
+Miami, Orange Bowl: CFB Playoff Semifinal
$Indianapolis: CFB Playoff National Championship

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	38.4 ppg	3	10
Rushing	190.9 ypg	6	36
Passing	251.9 ypg	7	51
Total	442.8 ypg	5	26

DEFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	10.2 ppg	1	1
Rushing	78.9 ypg	1	2
Passing	190.1 ypg	2	13
Total	268.9 ypg	1	2

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
+3	+0.20	6	49

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	31.7	9
Defense	24.9	3
Margin	+6.8	4
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	50.2%	9
Defense	32.6%	1
Margin	+17.6%	1
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	7.1	4
Defense	4.2	1
Margin	+2.9	1
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.9	12
Defense	2.3	1
Margin	+2.6	1
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	3.1	24
Actual	4	39
Margin	+0.9	56

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

1

Georgia's defense ranked first overall in EPA/play, EPA/pass, rushing success rate, forced third down rate, early downs EPA/play, big play rate and points per quality possession — among other categories.

44.0%

The Bulldogs faced an average distance of 5.86 yards to go, second shortest in all of college football, but converted only 44.0 percent of third downs, 41st nationally.

14

The Bulldogs scored 14 touchdowns of 25-plus yards in 2021. They posted 0.264 EPA/pass, sixth best in explosiveness.

DEFENSE UGA's 2021 defense was special, and expecting the 2022 group to pick up where it left off is unrealistic. Still, it's worth noting that many of last year's preseason projections had that defense as a potential weak link.

The Bulldogs have to replace some serious talent on the defensive line, but the good news is that position coach Tray Scott has plenty more stockpiled. Jalen Carter, arguably the most talented defender on the 2021 squad, is back, and he'll anchor the front. Fellow junior Nazir Stackhouse had an excellent offseason, as did veteran defensive end Tramel Walthour.

The outside linebacker group got a massive boost when Nolan Smith and Robert Beal Jr. elected to return. Those two wreaked havoc late in the 2021 season, especially during the playoffs. Inside linebacker is a different story, as UGA had all three of its key contributors drafted. There will be new faces manning the second level of the defense, but Jamon Dumas-Johnson has shown a great deal of promise, while Smael Mondon Jr. and Xavian Sorey Jr. are two of the best overall athletes on the team.

Georgia's secondary exceeded expectations a year ago when it was forced to replace both cornerbacks. Deal-sealing cornerback Kelee Ringo, the nation's top player at that position in the 2020 class, is entering his second season as the starter. The job across from him is up for grabs, but sophomore Kamari Lassiter manned it in the spring.

Christopher Smith is back for a fifth season at one of the safety spots, and the competition for the other one should last deep into preseason camp.

SPECIALISTS Thunder-footed punter Jake Camarda is off to the NFL, so the Bulldogs went down under to get Brett Thorson in the 2022 class. He enrolled in the spring and is expected to win that job. Clutch placekicker Jack Podlesny is also back after making some big kicks during the 2021 stretch run. The Bulldogs are also set at the return positions, with Kearis Jackson and Kenny McIntosh having tremendous experience with punt and kick returns, respectively.

FINAL ANALYSIS Georgia's talent level gives it a high floor and a high ceiling. Smart's crew will be big, fast and physical on both sides of the ball, but it's never easy to replace the amount of production the Bulldogs lost after winning it all a year ago. Finding leadership will be the key to navigating yet another workable schedule.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

WR	**5**	**Adonai Mitchell (So.)**	81	Marcus Rosemy-Jacksaint (Jr.)
WR	**84**	**Ladd McConkey (So.)**	11	Arian Smith (So.)
WR	10	Kearis Jackson (Sr.)	8	Dominick Blaylock (Jr.)
LT	59	Broderick Jones (So.)	65	Amarius Mims (So.)
LG	73	Xavier Truss (Jr.)	77	Devin Willock (So.)
C	**63**	**Sedrick Van Pran (So.)**	58	Austin Blaske (So.)
RG	51	Tate Ratledge (So.)	**50**	**Warren Ericson (Sr.)**
RT	**70**	**Warren McClendon (Jr.)**	56	Micah Morris (Fr.)
TE	**19**	**Brock Bowers (So.)**	0	Darnell Washington (Jr.)
QB	**13**	**Stetson Bennett (Sr.)**	15	Carson Beck (So.)
RB	6	Kenny McIntosh (Sr.)	2	Kendall Milton (Jr.)

DEFENSE (3)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	90	Tramel Walthour (Sr.)	13	Mykel Williams (Fr.)
NT	96	Zion Logue (Jr.)	94	Jonathan Jefferson (Fr.)
DT	88	Jalen Carter (Jr.)	78	Nazir Stackhouse (Jr.)
OLB	**4**	**Nolan Smith (Sr.)**	33	Robert Beal Jr. (Sr.)
ILB	10	Jamon Dumas-Johnson (So.)	0	Rian Davis (Jr.)
ILB	15	Trezmen Marshall (Jr.)	2	Smael Mondon Jr. (So.)
STAR	31	William Poole (Sr.)	22	Javon Bullard (So.)
CB	**5**	**Kelee Ringo (So.)**	6	Daylen Everette (Fr.)
CB	3	Kamari Lassiter (So.)	1	Nyland Green (Fr.)
S	**29**	**Christopher Smith (Sr.)**	17	Dan Jackson (Jr.)
S	23	Tykee Smith (Jr.)	14	David Daniel-Sisavanh (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	96	Jack Podlesny (Sr.)	**KR**	6	Kenny McIntosh (Sr.)
P	99	Brett Thorson (Fr.)	**PR**	10	Kearis Jackson (Sr.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	**ATT**	**COMP**	**YDS**	**TD**	**INT**
Stetson Bennett	**287**	**185**	**2,862**	**29**	**7**
JT Daniels	94	68	722	7	3
Carson Beck	**23**	**10**	**176**	**2**	**2**
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Zamir White	160	856	5.4	11	
James Cook	113	728	6.4	7	
Kenny McIntosh	**58**	**328**	**5.7**	**3**	
Kendall Milton	**56**	**264**	**4.7**	**1**	
Stetson Bennett	**56**	**259**	**4.6**	**1**	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Brock Bowers	**56**	**882**	**15.8**	**13**	
Ladd McConkey	**31**	**447**	**14.4**	**5**	
Adonai Mitchell	**29**	**426**	**14.7**	**4**	
James Cook	27	284	10.5	4	
Jermaine Burton	26	497	19.1	5	

KICKING: **Jack Podlesny, 22-27 FGs, 137 pts.**
TACKLES: Lewis Cine, 73; Nakobe Dean, 72
SACKS: **Robert Beal Jr., 6.5**
INTERCEPTIONS: Derion Kendrick, 4

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE BULLDOGS

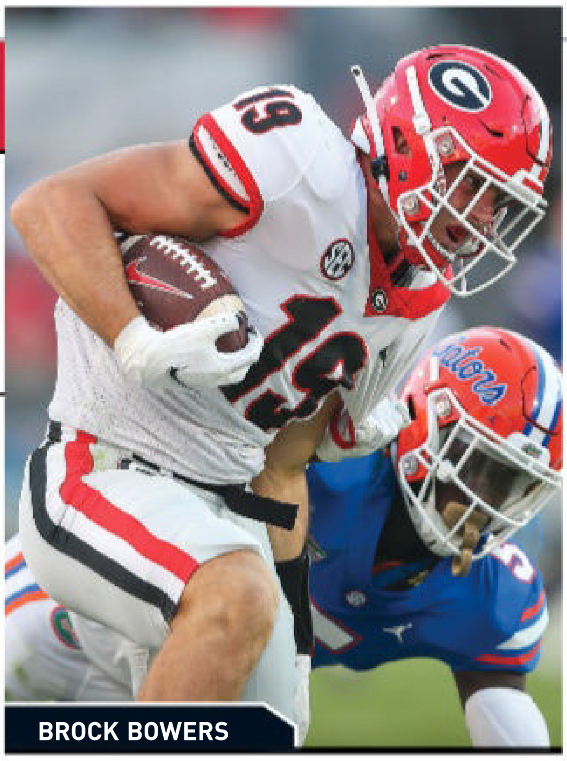
Opposing Coaches Size Up Georgia

"They finally got over the hump and killed the narrative. Now what? Are they a one-off deal, or are they going to be the first SEC program that can really, truly hang and bang with Bama year in and year out? The expectations there aren't to win a one-off title and go back to nine and 10 wins. … The quarterback is back, but one of the worst things that can happen after a successful season or a title run is when a good-but-not-great QB comes back. Everyone is expecting an advancement that might not be possible. Remember, there were times last season they won in spite of this offense. …Losing [defensive coordinator Dan] Lanning isn't going to really hurt, but losing those NFL players on the front sure as hell will. [Will] Muschamp is best when he's got the one job, and he'll bring along the young guy [co-DC Glenn Schumann] because Will works so well with Kirby [Smart]. That won't be a problem. … They're loaded with elite young guys coming in, but they aren't going to have the luxury of that defense from last season. So eventually, they're going to have to open the offense up and push Stetson Bennett. They won a national title in the most comfortable way possible for their head coach: The best defensive players in the country doing their thing, and then playing a safe offensive game. That will have to change some."

OUTSIDE THE HUDDLE

BIG-PLAY YOUNGSTERS For all that Georgia lost after the 2021 season, each of the players who accounted for Georgia's three fourth-quarter TDs in the College Football Playoff National Championship Game — Brock Bowers, Adonai Mitchell and Kelee Ringo — were all freshmen. Bowers and Mitchell were true freshmen, while Ringo was a redshirt freshman. Bowers and Mitchell caught a touchdown in each of Georgia's playoff matchups, while Bowers reached the end zone in each of UGA's last five games of the 2021 season.

SPEAKING OF BOWERS The 6'4", 230-pound tight end took the SEC by storm in 2021. He was arguably the league's toughest matchup for defenses and will enter the 2022 season as the favorite to win the Mackey Award. He set a UGA record for most receiving touchdowns in a season with 13 and is nearly halfway to the career mark after just one season. The Napa, Calif., native also racked up four games of 100 receiving yards or more and had five multi-touchdown games.


BROCK BOWERS

Tom DiPace

SACK SURGE Returning edge rushers Nolan Smith and Robert Beal Jr. combined for just six sacks through the first 13 games of Georgia's 2021 season. Those two then accounted for four sacks during UGA's College Football Playoff games. Smith, the nation's No. 1 overall prospect in the 2019 class, is entering his fourth season, while Beal is back for his sixth. It's worth noting that Beal was in the NCAA's student-athlete transfer portal in December 2019 but ultimately chose to stay with the program.

RISING STAR

A late-season injury to Jamaree Salyer opened the door for redshirt freshman **BRODERICK JONES** to step in at left tackle. He started four games and entered the lineup in the national championship game, giving the Bulldogs' offense a major boost.

2022 GEORGIA ROSTER

QUARTERBACKS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
15 Beck, Carson	6-4/215	So.	Jacksonville, FL
13 Bennett, Stetson	5-11/190	Sr.	Blackshear, GA
26 Drake, Collin	6-1/195	Fr.	Ennis, TX
16 Muschamp, Jackson	6-2/190	So.	Columbia, SC
24 Priestley, Nathan	6-4/205	Jr.	Los Angeles, CA
14 Stockton, Gunner	6-1/210	Fr.	Tiger, GA
12 Vandagriff, Brock	6-3/205	Fr.	Bogart, GA

RUNNING BACKS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
20 Clark, Sevaughn	6-1/215	Jr.	Dawsonville, GA
30 Edwards, Daijun	5-10/201	Jr.	Norman Park, GA
42 Ferguson, Tauheed	5-11/200	Fr.	Winder, GA
32 Jones, Cash	6-0/182	Fr.	Brock, TX
49 Jones, Gleaton	6-1/200	Fr.	Albany, GA
45 Knisely, Kurt	6-0/200	So.	Athens, GA
6 McIntosh, Kenny	6-1/210	Sr.	Ft. Lauderdale, FL
2 Milton, Kendall	6-1/220	Jr.	Fresno, CA

RECEIVERS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
8 Blaylock, Dominick	6-1/205	Jr.	Marietta, GA
14 Gilbert, Arik	6-5/240	So.	Marietta, GA
89 Hicks, Braxton	6-2/195	So.	Tiger, GA
10 Jackson, Kearis	6-0/200	Sr.	Fort Valley, GA
Johnson, Grant	6-0/160	Sr.	Norcross, GA
82 Johnson, Logan	5-6/155	Fr.	Bogart, GA
84 McConkey, Ladd	6-0/185	So.	Chatsworth, GA
17 Meeks, Jackson	6-2/205	Fr.	Phenix City, AL
87 Mews, Mekhi	5-8/170	Fr.	Lawrenceville, GA
5 Mitchell, Adonai	6-4/190	So.	Missouri City, TX
23 Morrissette, De'Nylon	6-1/200	Fr.	Stone Mountain, GA
25 Peterson, Steven	6-2/214	Sr.	Kennesaw, GA
81 Rosemy-Jacksaint, Marcus	6-2/195	Jr.	Pompano Beach, FL
11 Smith, Arian	6-0/185	So.	Bradley, FL
18 Smith, C.J.	6-3/175	Fr.	Apopka, FL
35 Stephenson, Lorenzo	5-6/185	Sr.	Auburn, GA
39 Tindall, Brady	5-10/192	Sr.	Atlanta, GA
46 Vining, George	6-0/205	Jr.	Macon, GA
37 Waters, Woody	5-8/160	So.	Newnan, GA

TIGHT ENDS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
19 Bowers, Brock	6-4/230	So.	Napa, CA
43 Day, Davis	6-4/250	Sr.	Hamilton, GA
4 Delp, Oscar	6-5/225	Fr.	Cumming, GA
88 Goede, Ryland	6-6/240	Jr.	Kennesaw, GA
44 Hagerty, Michael	6-4/225	Jr.	Hinesville, GA
Rainey, Hunter	6-4/230	Fr.	Gainesville, GA
80 Seither, Brett	6-5/228	Jr.	Clearwater, FL
85 Sheehan, Drew	6-2/215	Jr.	Woodstock, GA
0 Washington, Darnell	6-7/265	Jr.	Las Vegas, NV

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
66 Bah, Aliou	6-5/330	Fr.	Memphis, TN
58 Blaske, Austin	6-5/310	So.	Faulkville, GA
68 Brown, Chris	6-5/300	So.	Savannah, GA
50 Ericson, Warren	6-4/305	Sr.	Suwanee, GA
53 Fairchild, Dylan	6-5/300	Fr.	Cumming, GA
67 Ferguson, John	6-5/270	Fr.	Athens, GA
71 Greene III, Earnest	6-4/330	Fr.	Los Angeles, CA
64 Hood, Jacob	6-8/350	Fr.	Nashville, TN
76 Johnson, Miles	6-5/320	So.	Blue Ridge, GA
59 Jones, Broderick	6-4/315	So.	Lithonia, GA
52 Kinnie, Cameron	6-3/300	So.	Suwanee, GA
78 Lindberg, Chad	6-6/325	So.	League City, TX
70 McClendon, Warren	6-4/300	Jr.	Brunswick, GA
65 Mims, Amarius	6-7/330	So.	Cochran, GA
56 Morris, Micah	6-6/330	Fr.	Kingsland, GA
51 Ratledge, Tate	6-6/320	So.	Rome, GA
72 Scroggs, Griffin	6-3/315	Fr.	Grayson, GA
73 Truss, Xavier	6-7/330	Jr.	West Warwick, RI
63 Van Pran, Sedrick	6-4/310	So.	New Orleans, LA
79 Wallace, Weston	6-4/320	Fr.	Eatonton, GA
60 Webb, Clay	6-3/290	Jr.	Oxford, AL
77 Willock, Devin	6-7/335	So.	New Milford, NJ
55 Wilson, Jared	6-3/330	Fr.	Winston-Salem, NC

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
99 Alexander, Bear	6-3/315	Fr.	Denton, TX
97 Brinson, Warren	6-4/305	Jr.	Savannah, GA
89 Brown, Malcolm	6-0/270	Fr.	Guyton, GA
88 Carter, Jalen	6-3/310	Jr.	Apopka, FL
55 Dean, Marlin	6-5/275	Fr.	Bowman, GA
93 Ingram-Dawkins, Tyrion	6-5/300	Fr.	Gaffney, SC
94 Jefferson, Jonathan	6-3/295	Fr.	Douglasville, GA
96 Logue, Zion	6-5/295	Jr.	Lebanon, TN
45 Norton, Bill	6-6/300	Jr.	Memphis, TN
78 Stackhouse, Nazir	6-3/320	Jr.	Stone Mountain, GA
90 Walthour, Tramel	6-3/280	Sr.	Hinesville, GA
95 Washington, Shone	6-4/300	Fr.	New Orleans, LA
13 Williams, Mykel	6-5/260	Fr.	Columbus, GA

LINEBACKERS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
33 Beal Jr., Robert	6-4/255	Sr.	Duluth, GA
54 Brock, Cade	6-0/250	So.	Subligna, GA
32 Chambliss, Chaz	6-2/250	So.	Carrollton, GA
42 Collins, Graham	6-2/215	So.	Atlanta, GA
57 Collins, Luke	6-2/245	Fr.	Birmingham, AL
0 Davis, Rian	6-2/230	Jr.	Apopka, FL
10 Dumas-Johnson, Jamon	6-1/235	So.	Hyattsville, MD
Erb, Stephen	5-11/190	Jr.	Suwanee, GA
30 Foster, Terrell	6-1/210	Fr.	Kennesaw, GA
Jackson, Myles	6-0/236	Jr.	Louisville, GA
49 Johnson, Samuel	6-1/225	So.	Lilburn, GA
39 Lark, Collin	6-1/195	Jr.	Dallas, TX
16 Madden, C.J.	6-4/230	Fr.	Ellenwood, GA
15 Marshall, Trezmen	6-1/230	Jr.	Homerville, GA
2 Mondon Jr., Smael	6-3/220	So.	Dallas, GA
8 Sherman, MJ	6-2/235	Jr.	Baltimore, MD
4 Smith, Nolan	6-3/235	Sr.	Savannah, GA
18 Sorey Jr., Xavian	6-3/214	Fr.	Campbellton, FL
11 Walker, Jalon	6-2/225	Fr.	Salisbury, NC
27 Washington, C.J.	6-1/220	Fr.	Cedartown, GA

DEFENSIVE BACKS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
46 Bowles, Payton	5-10/170	So.	Athens, GA
22 Bullard, Javon	5-11/180	So.	Milledgeville, GA
26 Cannady, Jehlen	6-0/176	So.	Macon, GA
14 Daniel-Sisavanh, David	6-2/185	So.	Woodstock, GA
6 Everette, Daylen	6-1/190	Fr.	Norfolk, VA
48 Eziukwu, Austine	6-1/210	Jr.	Powder Springs, GA
1 Green, Nyland	6-1/185	Fr.	Covington, GA
43 Helow, Matthew	5-11/175	Fr.	Jacksonville, FL
17 Jackson, Dan	6-1/190	Jr.	Gainesville, GA
3 Lassiter, Kamari	6-0/180	So.	Savannah, GA
31 Poole, William	6-0/190	Sr.	Atlanta, GA
48 Potter, Wesley	6-3/205	Jr.	Canton, GA
5 Ringo, Kelee	6-2/205	So.	Tacoma, WA
29 Smith, Christopher	5-11/190	Sr.	Atlanta, GA
23 Smith, Tykee	5-10/198	Jr.	Philadelphia, PA
37 Southern, Drew	5-11/180	Fr.	Cumming, GA
24 Starks, Malaki	6-1/205	Fr.	Jefferson, GA
38 Taylor, Patrick	6-0/175	So.	Johns Creek, GA
20 Thomas, JaCorey	6-0/200	Fr.	Orlando, FL

SPECIALISTS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
98 Jones, Noah (P)	6-0/165	Fr.	Cairo, GA
56 Mote, William (LS)	6-2/230	Jr.	Hoover, AL
96 Podlesny, Jack (K)	6-1/180	Sr.	St. Simons Island, GA
97 Sumlin, Matthew (K)	5-11/170	So.	Smyrna, GA
99 Thorson, Brett (P)	6-2/210	Fr.	Melbourne, Aus.
47 Walker, Payne (LS)	6-2/249	Sr.	Suwanee, GA
66 Washburn, Jonathan (LS)	6-3/220	Fr.	Ringgold, GA
99 Zirkel, Jared (K)	6-3/185	So.	Kerrville, TX

2022 **SIGNEES**

Kirby Smart and his Georgia coaching staff brought in yet another big-time class in 2022. Unlike 2021, when the Bulldogs inked just 20 players, this group had both quantity and quality. A total of 29 players signed their name on a UGA letter of intent, and the majority of those signees, 18, enrolled in January.

The class was headlined by five defensive players who finished the cycle with a five-star rating per the 247Sports Composite. Defensive end Mykel Williams, a Columbus, Ga., native, has to be considered the crown jewel. He ranked No. 4 overall in the class. The Bulldogs also grabbed elite athlete Malaki Starks, who played his high school ball just 20 miles from Georgia's football facility.

Edge rusher Marvin Jones Jr. and cornerbacks Jaheim Singletary and Daylen Everette, all five-star prospects, joined the class down the stretch to help UGA finish No. 3 nationally. It's UGA's fifth top-three finish in Smart's six full recruiting cycles with the program. Starks, Singletary, and Everette are joined by four-star safety JaCorey Thomas and four-star cornerback Julian Humphrey to make up one of the nation's best defensive back classes.

The Bulldogs also addressed outside and inside linebacker by adding Jones and two others on the outside as well as stud inside linebacker prospects Jalon Walker and C.J. Washington. EJ Lightsey, a high-upside athlete projected to play inside, joined the class on National Signing Day.

Gunner Stockton, as quarterbacks so often do, committed early and served as the glue for the class. He helped the Bulldogs recruit as they landed offensive standouts Branson Robinson (running back), Oscar Delp (tight end) and Earnest Greene III (offensive line).

BY POSITION

Defensive Linemen	6
Offensive Linemen	5
Wide Receivers	4
Linebackers	4
Defensive Backs	4
Running Backs	2
Quarterbacks	1
Tight Ends	1
Specialists	1
Athletes	1

BY STATE

Georgia	12
Florida	4
Texas	4
Tennessee	2
Alabama	1
California	1
Louisiana	1
Mississippi	1
North Carolina	1
Virginia	1
Australia	1

RECRUIT SPOTLIGHT

MYKEL WILLIAMS

DL • Columbus, GA

Georgia's highest-ranked signee in the 2022 class had arguably the most interesting recruitment when you look at the big picture. Mykel Williams played his high school ball on the western border of the Peach State and was thought for months to be a strong Bulldog lean.

But Williams had a West Coast connection, you see. His brother, Michael Trigg, was a tight end at USC. Mykel made his way to Los Angeles for an official visit in June 2021, and the Trojans swung his recruitment in their favor. He committed to Clay Helton and staff just a few days later, dealing a gut punch to the Bulldogs. Losing an elite in-state prospect to a program over 2,200 miles away seemed almost unthinkable.

But UGA's staff never gave up. Running backs coach and former Columbus-area high school coach Dell McGee spearheaded an effort that kept lines of communication open. The door was flung wide open when USC fired Helton, and the Bulldogs pounced. After a couple of visits to Georgia in October 2021, one unofficial and one official, Williams flipped from USC to UGA and changed the complexion of the 2022 class in an instant. He went on to dominate during the All-American Bowl in January.

Name	Pos	Ht/Wt	Hometown	247	ESPN	Rivals	Nat. Rank
Bear Alexander	DL	6-3/315	Denton, TX	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	50
Aliou Bah	OT	6-5/330	Memphis, TN	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	358
Dillon Bell	WR	6-0/210	Houston, TX	★★★	★★★	★★★	456
Drew Bobo	OT	6-5/290	Auburn, AL	★★★	★★★	★★★	670
Oscar Delp	TE	6-5/225	Cumming, GA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	100
Daylen Everette	CB	6-1/190	Norfolk, VA	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	28
Earnest Greene III	OL	6-4/330	Los Angeles, CA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	45
Jacob Hood	OT	6-8/350	Nashville, TN	★★★	★★★	★★★★	425
Julian Humphrey	CB	6-0/190	Webster, TX	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	81
Marvin Jones Jr.	EDGE	6-5/250	Sunrise, FL	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	24
EJ Lightsey	LB	6-2/210	Fitzgerald, GA	★★★	★★★	★★★	490
C.J. Madden	EDGE	6-4/230	Ellenwood, GA	★★★★	★★★	★★★	355
Christen Miller	DL	6-4/295	Ellenwood, GA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	103
De'Nylon Morrissette	WR	6-1/200	Stone Mountain, GA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	246
Andrew Paul	RB	5-11/220	Dallas, TX	★★★	★★★★	★★★	531
Branson Robinson	RB	5-10/220	Canton, MS	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	62
Griffin Scroggs	OL	6-3/315	Grayson, GA	★★★	★★★	★★★	782
Jaheim Singletary	CB	6-1/175	Jacksonville, FL	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	27
C.J. Smith	WR	6-3/175	Apopka, FL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	225
Darris Smith	EDGE	6-5/225	Baxley, GA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	161
Cole Speer	WR	5-11/185	Calhoun, GA	★★★	★★★	★★★	729
Malaki Starks	ATH	6-1/205	Jefferson, GA	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	19
Gunner Stockton	QB	6-1/210	Tiger, GA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	124
JaCorey Thomas	S	6-0/200	Orlando, FL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	326
Brett Thorson	P	6-2/210	Melbourne, Aus.	★★★	★★★	★★	1,751
Jalon Walker	LB	6-2/225	Salisbury, NC	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	46
C.J. Washington	LB	6-1/220	Cedartown, GA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	135
Shone Washington	DL	6-4/300	New Orleans, LA	★★★	★★★★	★★★	594
Mykel Williams	DL	6-5/260	Columbus, GA	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	4

KENTUCKY WILDCATS

National Forecast: 21 • SEC East Prediction: 3 • Projected Record: 8-4, 4-4 SEC

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Mark Stoops
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 59-53 (9 years)
CAREER RECORD: 59-53 (9 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Rich Scangarello
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Brad White
LOCATION: Lexington, KY
STADIUM: Kroger Field (61,000)

KEY WILDCATS

WILL LEVIS, QB Levis threw for 2,827 yards and ran for 376 with 33 total TDs in his first season at Kentucky after transferring from Penn State.

CHRIS RODRIGUEZ JR., RB Set a school record with nine 100-yard rushing performances as a junior and enters 2022 with 2,740 rushing yards and 26 touchdowns in his career.

DEANDRE SQUARE, LB Will use his extra year of eligibility after totaling 81 tackles, 9.5 tackles for a loss, three sacks and the game-clinching interception in the Citrus Bowl.

KEY LOSSES

WAN'DALE ROBINSON, WR Ranked second in the SEC in catches (104) and receiving yards (1,334) while breaking Kentucky single-season records in both categories.

JOSH PASCHAL, DE A three-year team captain who led Kentucky with 15 tackles for a loss and eight quarterback hurries while ranking second on the team with five sacks.

DARIAN KINNARD, OT A consensus first-team All-American at right tackle who won the Jacobs Blocking Trophy from the SEC.

THE VERDICT

The return of quarterback Will Levis and one of the SEC's deepest backfields is enough for Kentucky to push for its third season of 10 victories under Mark Stoops. However, there is some turnover around Levis, as the Wildcats have a new play-caller (Rich Scangarello), lost No. 1 receiver Wan'Dale Robinson to the NFL and saw three standouts depart the offensive line. Only five starters are back on defense, but Kentucky has finished in the top five in the SEC in scoring defense in each of the last four years. A tough road slate — at Tennessee, Ole Miss and Florida — also awaits in '22.

POSTSEASON: Tampa Bay Bowl vs. Michigan State

BETTORS' BOX

KENTUCKY FUTURES

ODDS TO WIN NATIONAL TITLE: 100/1
ODDS TO WIN SEC: 40/1
ODDS TO WIN SEC EAST: 15/1
SEASON WIN O/U: 7.5 (Over -130)
HEISMAN CONTENDERS: QB Will Levis (150/1); RB Chris Rodriguez Jr. (200/1)
BETTORS' BYTE: Wildcats are 26–12 Over the total in 38 non-conference games under Mark Stoops.

Information provided by the Bet the Board staff

Expectations are on the rise for Kentucky football.

After going 41 years without a 10-win season, the Wildcats have now reached that plateau twice in the last four years. There are several big holes to fill from last season's Citrus Bowl winners, but the 2022 roster was boosted by multiple NFL draft prospects returning to school and several important defenders electing to use the extra year of eligibility granted all players in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The return of quarterback Will Levis is the primary cause for optimism. Levis already has proven himself as Kentucky's best quarterback in more than a decade, and there is genuine reason to believe he can develop into an early-round NFL draft pick with another year in Lexington.

Levis cannot mount an SEC East challenge alone, though. How Kentucky answers the questions around him will determine if the Wildcats can make a push for Atlanta.

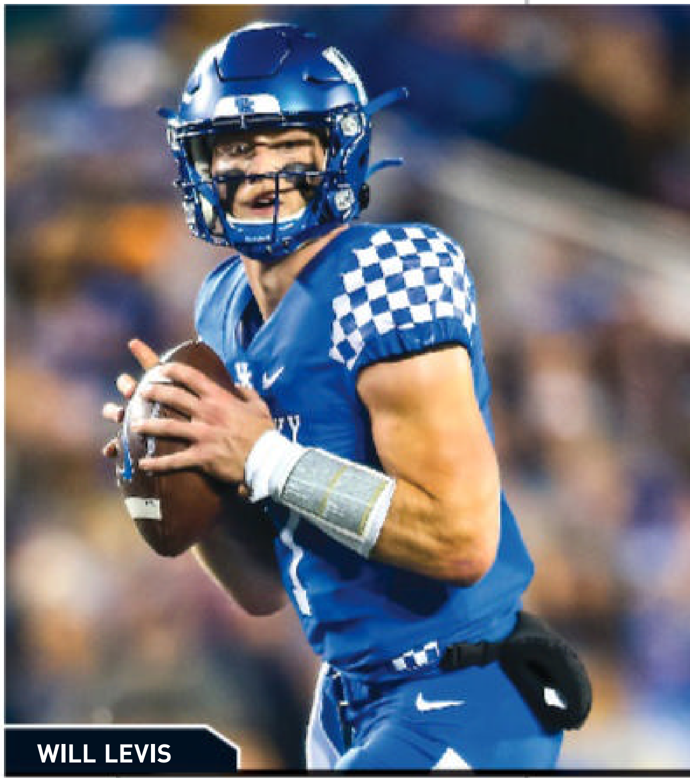
OFFENSE Gone are offensive coordinator Liam Coen, who returned to the Super Bowl champion Los Angeles Rams, and star wide receiver Wan'Dale Robinson, who broke the Kentucky single-season records for catches and receiving yards in his one season as a Wildcat. Head coach Mark Stoops hopes to build on Coen's success in returning balance to Kentucky's offense by replacing him with former San Francisco 49ers quarterbacks coach Rich Scangarello, who will run a similar offense from the same Sean McVay/Kyle Shanahan coaching tree.

Replacing Robinson will be difficult, but Kentucky signed transfer wide receivers Tayvion Robinson (Virginia Tech) and Javon Baker (Alabama). Neither transfer is likely to duplicate Wan'Dale Robinson's record-breaking season, but between that duo and a highly touted group of freshmen led by four-star prospects Barion Brown and Dane Key, the passing game should be less reliant on one receiver. Tight end Keaton Upshaw could be a go-to receiver, too, after missing the entire 2021 season with injury.

There is no question about who will throw to those receivers. Levis could have entered the draft this year but saw room for even more improvement after just one season as a starter. Last season, Levis became the first Kentucky quarterback to total 3,000 yards of offense since 2014 while producing 33 touchdowns on the ground and through the air.

Running back Chris Rodriguez Jr. needs 1,134 yards to break Benny Snell Jr.'s Kentucky career rushing record. Fumbles were an issue for Rodriguez at times last season, but his physical rushing style should make him one of the best backs in the SEC this fall. Kentucky must replace two NFL draft picks on the offensive line, but the new-look "Big Blue Wall" received positive reviews this spring, especially at the interior positions.

DEFENSE Fears of a complete overhaul of Kentucky's defense were lessened when safety Tyrell Ajian and linebackers DeAndre Square, Jacquez Jones and Jordan



WILL LEVIS

UK Athletics

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Miami (Ohio)
Sept. 10	at Florida
Sept. 17	Youngstown State
Sept. 24	Northern Illinois
Oct. 1	at Ole Miss
Oct. 8	South Carolina
Oct. 15	Mississippi State
Oct. 29	at Tennessee
Nov. 5	at Missouri
Nov. 12	Vanderbilt
Nov. 19	Georgia
Nov. 26	Louisville

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 10-3, 5-3 SEC

Sept. 4	ULM	W	45-10
Sept. 11	Missouri	W	35-28
Sept. 18	Chattanooga	W	28-23
Sept. 25	at South Carolina	W	16-10
Oct. 2	Florida	W	20-13
Oct. 9	LSU	W	42-21
Oct. 16	at Georgia	L	13-30
Oct. 30	at Mississippi State	L	17-31
Nov. 6	Tennessee	L	42-45
Nov. 13	at Vanderbilt	W	34-17
Nov. 20	New Mexico State	W	56-16
Nov. 27	at Louisville	W	52-21
Jan. 1	vs. Iowa #	W	20-17

#Citrus Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	31.8 ppg	5	38
Rushing	199.5 ypg	5	25
Passing	225.7 ypg	10	71
Total	425.2 ypg	8	46
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	21.7 ppg	4	26
Rushing	121.5 ypg	4	20
Passing	218.6 ypg	8	52
Total	340.1 ypg	4	26
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
-11	-0.85	14	126

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	27.2	103
Defense	27.7	32
Margin	-0.5	70
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	51.1%	5
Defense	43.0%	77
Margin	+8.1%	19
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	6.5	19
Defense	5.6	58
Margin	+0.9	31
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.8	18
Defense	4.1	62
Margin	+0.7	30
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	-2.5	102
Actual	-11	125
Margin	-8.5	124

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

4.76

The Wildcats averaged 4.76 yards per rush in short-yardage situations. Kentucky's rushing offense ranked fifth in the FBS in rushing success rate (48.5 percent) and 31st in explosiveness (0.103 EPA/rush).

45.8%

Kentucky ranked 112th in passing efficiency allowed, as opponents averaged a 45.8 percent passing success rate in 2021.

6.23

Kentucky faced 6.23 yards to go on average on third down, seventh shortest among FBS teams. The Wildcats ranked seventh in third-down conversions, converting 51.4 percent of attempts.

Wright elected to use their extra year of eligibility to return to Lexington. Still, at least four new starters will be needed on a unit that will depend on some of the highest-rated recruits in program history to step into featured roles.

With Josh Paschal and Marquan McCall moving on to the NFL, it is finally time for the much-hyped 2020 defensive line class to carry the load. That group is led by former five-star signee Justin Rogers at nose guard. Octavious Oxendine, Tre'vonn Rybka and Josaih Hayes, all four-star prospects in the 2020 class, will join Rogers up front.

The super senior linebackers will not need to carry the load alone at the defense's second level thanks to the presence of edge rusher J.J. Weaver and promising young inside linebackers Trevin Wallace and D'Eryk Jackson. The hope is that a deep linebacker rotation allows Kentucky to use more of its base 3-4 defense than a year ago while keeping everyone fresh.

Safety should be the strength of the secondary with Ajian back and junior Jalen Geiger taking over a starting role. Cornerback is a question, though, with only one player on the roster, junior Carrington Valentine, bringing any significant game experience to the group. A season-ending knee injury suffered by nickel back Vito Tisdale in the spring adds to the depth concerns.

Stoops landed a key addition to the secondary via the transfer portal in Keidron Smith from Ole Miss, but Kentucky may still need immediate contributions from its 2022 high school class to supplement depth. Four-star edge rushers Keaten Wade and Tyreese Fearbry lead that group, but athlete Kobi Albert could contribute in the secondary, too.

SPECIALISTS The extra year of eligibility helped this group, with former walk-on Matt Ruffolo returning at kicker. Ruffolo doesn't have the strongest leg, but he has brought consistency to the position the last two years. Australian Wilson Berry is likely to punt. Robinson proved capable of contributing in the return game at Virginia Tech, but Stoops has generally taken a conservative approach in that department.

FINAL ANALYSIS The gap between Georgia and the rest of the SEC East remains sizable, but if Kentucky can address a few of the remaining concerns on the roster either through the transfer portal or incoming freshman class, Stoops' squad should be able to mount a case as the biggest challenger to Georgia in the division.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (4)

WR	86	DeMarcus Harris (Jr.)	89	Chris Lewis (Fr.)
WR	9	Tayvion Robinson (Sr.)	10	Chauncey Magwood (So.)
WR		Javon Baker (Jr.)	6	Dane Key (Fr.)
LT	56	Deondre Buford (So.)	78	Kiyaunta Goodwin (Fr.)
LG	**68**	**Kenneth Horsey (Sr.)**	71	John Young (So.)
C	**75**	**Eli Cox (Jr.)**	60	Quintin Wilson (Sr.)
RG	79	Tashawn Manning (Sr.)	62	Jager Burton (So.)
RT	77	Jeremy Flax (Jr.)	74	David Wohlabaugh Jr. (So.)
TE	88	Keaton Upshaw (Sr.)	84	Izayah Cummings (Jr.)
QB	**7**	**Will Levis (Sr.)**	11	Beau Allen (Jr.)
RB	**24**	**Chris Rodriguez Jr. (Sr.)**	17	JuTahn McClain (Jr.)

DEFENSE (5)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	90	Tre'vonn Rybka (So.)	92	Kahlil Saunders (So.)
NG	52	Justin Rogers (Jr.)	99	Josaih Hayes (Jr.)
DT	8	Octavious Oxendine (Jr.)	50	Darrion Henry-Young (So.)
OLB	13	J.J. Weaver (Jr.)		Keaten Wade (Fr.)
MLB	**10**	**Jacquez Jones (Sr.)**	56	D'Eryk Jackson (Jr.)
WLB	**5**	**DeAndre Square (Sr.)**	32	Trevin Wallace (So.)
OLB	**15**	**Jordan Wright (Sr.)**		Tyreese Fearbry (Fr.)
CB	**14**	**Carrington Valentine (Jr.)**		Kobi Albert (Fr.)
CB	37	Andru Phillips (So.)		Keidron Smith (Sr.)
SS	**6**	**Tyrell Ajian (Sr.)**	25	Jordan Lovett (So.)
FS	34	Jalen Geiger (Jr.)	30	Taj Dodson (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	96	Matt Ruffolo (Sr.)	KR	5	Mike Drennen II (Jr.)
P	93	Wilson Berry (So.)	PR	9	Tayvion Robinson (Sr.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Will Levis	**353**	**233**	**2,827**	**24**	**13**
Beau Allen	**12**	**8**	**92**	**0**	**0**
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Chris Rodriguez Jr.	**225**	**1,379**	**6.1**	**9**	
Kavosiey Smoke	**81**	**416**	**5.1**	**4**	
Will Levis	**107**	**376**	**3.5**	**9**	
JuTahn McClain	**34**	**165**	**4.9**	**0**	
La'Vell Wright	**9**	**118**	**13.1**	**1**	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Wan'Dale Robinson	104	1,334	12.8	7	
Josh Ali	41	601	14.7	3	
Justin Rigg	20	189	9.5	4	
Izayah Cummings	**14**	**195**	**13.9**	**3**	
DeMarcus Harris	**12**	**150**	**12.5**	**1**	

KICKING: **Matt Ruffolo, 10-13 FGs, 84 pts.**
TACKLES: **Jacquez Jones, 86;** two tied with 81
SACKS: **J.J .Weaver, 6.0**
INTERCEPTIONS: Quandre Mosely, 2; **J.J. Weaver, 2**

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE WILDCATS

Opposing Coaches Size Up Kentucky

"What you saw with Liam Coen's offense was really impressive. At first, a lot of defenses in the league were caught off-guard, but honestly, even as it got to Weeks 9 and 10 and 11, you still saw them confusing teams. That was a system success. So all the pressure now is on the new guy to keep that pace. Because he's off the same NFL tree, no one thinks they'll be all that different looking. The problem is that they don't have Wan'Dale Robinson, and the offensive line lost a lot, so the odds are stacked against them. They need to figure out their go-to guys this summer and keep the scheme transition simple. … Defensively, they're never nationally recognized or anything, but they're always effective. They do a good job keeping it in front of them in the passing game. … They're approaching a dangerous area in terms of expectations. There's going to be a point in time where the money they're paying [Mark Stoops] is going to come with more than just being happy with a bowl bid. For a long time, everyone in the industry has said Stoops has the best job in college football, but that can't last forever. Can they build a division-winning program, or will he find another job before that time comes? They're also competing in a division that gets a little better each year. You can always look at their games against Tennessee, South Carolina and Missouri as a good measurement. All three of those programs are improving season by season."

OUTSIDE THE HUDDLE

A PACKAGE DEAL The timing of the Rams' hire of Liam Coen for their offensive coordinator position was not ideal for Kentucky, but Mark Stoops' late-winter pursuit of Rich Scangarello to replace Coen was aided by the presence of new offensive line coach Zach Yenser. Like Scangarello, Yenser comes to Kentucky from the San Francisco 49ers. "It would have been much harder to take the job (without Yenser)," Scangarello says.

BROTHERLY LOVE When Kentucky inside linebackers coach and co-defensive coordinator Jon Sumrall was hired as Troy's new head coach, Stoops looked close to home for his next defensive hire. Two years after turning down a chance to join the Kentucky staff, Mike Stoops agreed to work for his younger brother this offseason. The dynamic has flipped since Mark served as Mike's defensive coordinator at Arizona from 2004 to 2009.

CHRIS RODRIGUEZ JR.

RECORDS IN SIGHT Stoops enters the 2022 season just one win shy of tying Paul "Bear" Bryant for most wins by a head coach in program history (60). Stoops will become the first Kentucky coach to spend 10 seasons on the job this fall.

PORTAL PARTY Much of Kentucky's 2021 success can be attributed to the immediate impact of transfers Will Levis (Penn State), Wan'Dale Robinson (Nebraska), Dare Rosenthal (LSU) and Jacquez Jones (Ole Miss). The success of those players helped Stoops and company recruit another wave of transfers for 2022. If Kentucky is to challenge in the east, transfers Tayvion Robinson (Virginia Tech), Tashawn Manning (Auburn), Javon Baker (Alabama) and Darrion Henry-Young (Ohio State) will need to contribute. More help could be on the way at offensive tackle and cornerback.

TWEAKS COMING While Stoops hired Scangarello in large part because he comes from the same coaching tree that produced Coen, there will be some differences in the offense Kentucky runs this fall. Scangarello and Yenser have promised to emphasize the outside zone rushing scheme used by the 49ers, which Coen planned to use but eventually elected to shelve in favor of the inside zone scheme Kentucky's players were more familiar with. Kentucky is expected to use a fullback more in Scangarello's offense. As for other changes, Scangarello was intentionally vague this spring, saying he wanted to maintain the advantage of mystery into the season.

RISING STAR

A four-star recruit from Frederick Douglass High School in Lexington, receiver **DANE KEY** graduated a semester early. He provided one of the highlights in the spring game with a touchdown pass from Will Levis. Plenty of snaps are available for the legacy recruit.

2022 KENTUCKY ROSTER

QUARTERBACKS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
11	Allen, Beau	6-2/215	Jr.	Lexington, KY
16	Hogan, Deuce	6-4/208	So.	Southlake, TX
7	Levis, Will	6-3/228	Sr.	Madison, CT
12	Sheron, Kaiya	6-3/202	Fr.	Somerset, KY
RUNNING BACKS		**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
47	Dingle II, Justice	6-3/265	Sr.	Bowling Green, KY
5	Drennen II, Mike	5-11/206	Jr.	Hilltop, OH
17	McClain, JuTahn	5-9/198	Jr.	Fairfield, OH
24	Rodriguez Jr., Chris	5-11/227	Sr.	McDonough, GA
0	Smoke, Kavosiey	5-9/204	Sr.	Wetumpka, AL
48	Varga, Jack	5-11/218	Sr.	Louisville, KY
39	Wheatley, Dillon	6-1/216	Sr.	Richmond, KY
29	Wright, La'Vell	6-0/203	Fr.	Louisville, KY
RECEIVERS		**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
	Baker, Javon	6-2/206	Jr.	Atlanta, GA
3	Crowdus, Dekel	5-10/171	Fr.	Lexington, KY
82	Crumes, Tae Tae	6-1/190	Jr.	Louisville, KY
34	Dennis, Trey	5-8/150	So.	Lexington, KY
86	Harris, DeMarcus	6-1/181	Jr.	Vero Beach, FL
6	Key, Dane	6-3/190	Fr.	Lexington, KY
81	Lanter, Cole	5-11/172	Fr.	Danville, KY
37	Leeper, Luke	5-11/190	Jr.	Louisville, KY
89	Lewis, Chris	6-4/198	Fr.	Pleasant Grove, AL
19	Lewis, Rahsaan	5-11/190	Sr.	Orlando, FL
10	Magwood, Chauncey	6-0/193	So.	Albany, GA
9	Robinson, Tayvion	5-11/190	Sr.	Virginia Beach, VA
TIGHT ENDS		**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
80	Bates, Brenden	6-5/263	Sr.	Cincinnati, OH
84	Cummings, Izayah	6-3/230	Jr.	Louisville, KY
85	Dingle, Jordan	6-4/230	Fr.	Bowling Green, KY
83	Monday, Jack	6-1/227	Fr.	Lexington, KY
88	Upshaw, Keaton	6-6/246	Sr.	Lima, OH
OFFENSIVE LINEMEN		**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
57	Berry, Jonathan	6-5/284	So.	Stamping Ground, KY
65	Bingham, Grant	6-5/321	Fr.	Johnson County, KY
56	Buford, Deondre	6-3/303	So.	Detroit, MI
62	Burton, Jager	6-4/300	So.	Lexington, KY
75	Cox, Eli	6-4/305	Jr.	Nicholasville, KY
77	Flax, Jeremy	6-6/330	Jr.	Detroit, MI
78	Goodwin, Kiyaunta	6-8/355	Fr.	Louisville, KY
68	Horsey, Kenneth	6-3/296	Sr.	Sanford, FL
72	Jones, Josh	6-6/314	So.	Columbus, GA
79	Manning, Tashawn	6-4/344	Sr.	Apopka, FL
58	Padgett, Lucas	6-4/295	So.	Birmingham, AL
67	Rodriguez, Paul	6-5/326	Fr.	Mason, OH
60	Wilson, Quintin	6-1/300	Sr.	Cincinnati, OH
74	Wohlabaugh Jr., David	6-6/295	So.	Stow, OH
71	Young, John	6-6/315	So.	Louisville, KY
DEFENSIVE LINEMEN		**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
91	Anaele, Sam	6-4/290	So.	Lagos, Nigeria
63	Bascom, Alex	6-5/268	Sr.	Louisville, KY
64	Bascom, Richard	6-5/275	Sr.	Louisville, KY
98	Beasley, Isaiah	5-11/273	Jr.	Radcliff, KY
95	Dinkins, Jamarius	6-5/296	Fr.	Columbus, OH
33	Durojaiye, Tomiwa	6-4/250	Fr.	Middletown, DE
99	Hayes, Josaih	6-3/313	Jr.	Horn Lake, MS
50	Henry-Young, Darrion	6-4/255	So.	Cincinnati, OH
8	Oxendine, Octavious	6-1/285	Jr.	Radcliff, KY
52	Rogers, Justin	6-3/330	Jr.	Detroit, MI
90	Rybka, Tre'vonn	6-4/277	So.	Dickson, TN
92	Saunders, Kahlil	6-5/287	So.	Huntsville, AL
LINEBACKERS		**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
45	Bruner, Jase	6-2/237	Jr.	Science Hill, KY
46	Eiserman, Braxton	6-1/230	Sr.	Jackson, KY
40	Fulton, Luke	6-4/217	Jr.	Youngstown, OH
39	Gough, Austin	6-0/218	So.	Owensboro, KY
56	Jackson, D'Eryk	6-1/243	Jr.	Dublin, GA
10	Jones, Jacquez	6-0/230	Sr.	Tuscaloosa, AL
59	Long, Conner	6-3/208	So.	East Lansing, MI
38	Nalty, William	6-0/223	Sr.	Metairie, LA
22	Oats, Chris	6-3/232	Sr.	Cincinnati, OH
5	Square, DeAndre	6-1/221	Sr.	Detroit, MI
44	Thrower, Martez	6-2/217	So.	Rochelle, GA
32	Wallace, Trevin	6-2/224	So.	Jesup, GA
13	Weaver, J.J.	6-5/238	Jr.	Louisville, KY
49	Williams, Jai	6-5/195	So.	Lake Forest, IL
15	Wright, Jordan	6-5/234	Sr.	Fort Lauderdale, FL
DEFENSIVE BACKS		**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
6	Ajian, Tyrell	6-0/190	Sr.	Mansfield, OH
30	Dodson, Taj	6-1/204	Jr.	Union City, GA
34	Geiger, Jalen	6-1/200	Jr.	Columbia, SC
31	Hairston, Maxwell	6-1/175	Fr.	West Bloomfield, MI
36	Huey, Adrian	6-0/172	Fr.	Nashville, TN
25	Lovett, Jordan	6-2/198	So.	Radcliff, KY
37	Phillips, Andru	6-0/183	So.	Mauldin, SC
24	Reed, Elijah	6-3/185	Fr.	Louisville, KY
29	Schulz, Jackson	6-2/191	Fr.	Louisville, KY
	Smith, Keidron	6-2/210	Sr.	West Palm Beach, FL
21	Stewart, Andre	5-11/174	Fr.	Atlanta, GA
7	Tisdale, Vito	6-1/185	Jr.	Bowling Green, KY
14	Valentine, Carrington	6-0/193	Jr.	Cincinnati, OH
27	Williams, Joel	6-1/205	Jr.	Baton Rouge, LA
SPECIALISTS		**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
93	Berry, Wilson (P)	6-4/207	Fr.	Maribyrnong, Australia
46	Degraw, Cade (LS)	5-11/221	Sr.	Lake Cormorant, MS
54	Morrow, Jordan (LS)	6-1/227	Sr.	Louisville, KY
55	Perry, Clay (LS)	6-0/189	Jr.	Upton, KY
12	Poore, Chance (K)	6-2/221	Sr.	Anderson, SC
96	Ruffolo, Matt (K)	5-11/210	Sr.	Centerville, OH
97	Wald, Graham (K)	6-0/167	Jr.	Lexington, KY

Andy Lyons/Getty Images

2022 **SIGNEES**

Just weeks before capping the 2021 season with a Citrus Bowl win, Kentucky signed the bulk of a recruiting class that suggests that 10-win seasons could become the norm for the program moving forward.

Kentucky's 2022 class is ranked in the top 15 nationally by each of the major recruiting services, topping the 2014 class as the program's best in the recruiting website era. Even Stoops' best previous Kentucky classes were ranked toward the bottom of the SEC, but the 2022 group is ranked fifth in the league by the 247Sports Composite.

The class includes 10 players ranked as four-star prospects by the 247Sports Composite. Several players in that group, including offensive tackle Kiyaunta Goodwin, wide receivers Dane Key and Barion Brown and outside linebackers/edge rushers Tyreese Fearbry and Keaten Wade, will be counted on for immediate contributions this fall. Six signees gained a head start on the competition for early snaps by enrolling for the spring semester.

Boosting the talent level in the wide receiver room was particularly important. Stoops appears to have addressed that need with the additions of Key, a Lexington high school star, and Brown, a Nashville native who also drew significant interest from Alabama. While they might lack the hype of Key and Brown, fellow wideouts Jordan Anthony and Brandon White should be among the fastest players on the roster, as both were former high school track stars.

Stoops and company signed the top two prospects in the Bluegrass State. The staff continued its recent emphasis on recruiting the Nashville area with signatures from Brown and the Wade brothers (athlete Destin Wade joins his brother Keaten, a linebacker, in the class). Kentucky remains willing to search for undervalued prospects, though, as evidenced by commitments from Delaware high school stars Tomiwa Durojaiye and Noah Matthews.

While he is not among the 10 players rated as a four-star prospect by the 247Sports Composite, few of the Wildcats' signees generated more excitement from coaches than Alabama athlete Kobi Albert, who could play wide receiver or defensive back in college. Former inside linebackers coach/co-defensive coordinator Jon Sumrall helped secure Albert's commitment even after being hired as Troy's head coach.

BY POSITION

Defensive Linemen	5
Athletes	4
Wide Receivers	3
Offensive Linemen	3
Defensive Backs	2
Tight Ends	1
Linebackers	1
Specialists	1

BY STATE

Kentucky	5
Ohio	3
Tennessee	3
Delaware	2
Georgia	2
Alabama	1
Michigan	1
Mississippi	1
Pennsylvania	1
Texas	1

RECRUIT SPOTLIGHT

KIYAUNTA GOODWIN

OT • Louisville, KY

A relationship of more than four years was not enough to escape one last bit of drama for Kentucky head coach Mark Stoops in his pursuit of four-star offensive tackle Kiyaunta Goodwin.

The Louisville native, who attended high school in southern Indiana, committed to Kentucky in April but made it clear in the weeks leading up to the December signing period that he was considering other options. On the morning of Signing Day, Goodwin first announced he was not ready to make a final decision between Kentucky and Michigan State at an event in Texas.

Later that day, Goodwin had reaffirmed his commitment to Kentucky, but when Stoops opened his news conference just after 1 p.m. the next afternoon, Goodwin still had not signed. NCAA rules prohibited Stoops from discussing unsigned players, so UK's coach let the news conference, scheduled to last 30 minutes, drag on in hopes the letter was still on its way. Stoops fielded text messages in between reporters' questions, letting a smile slip out after Goodwin's high school coach tweeted a picture of Goodwin signing his letter at 1:27 p.m. Another 20 minutes of waiting followed before Stoops received final word from his compliance staff that Goodwin's signature was in.

Kentucky began recruiting the 6'8", 355-pound tackle in middle school. After enrolling for the spring semester, he is expected to open the 2022 season as the backup left tackle.

"It's very gratifying," Stoops said on Signing Day. "It's a lot of hard work, a lot of years. Coach (Vince) Marrow has spent so much time with him, along with all of our staff. That's a really big get for our program."

Name	Pos	Ht/Wt	Hometown	247	ESPN	Rivals	Nat. Rank
Alex Afari	ATH	6-2/195	West Chester, OH	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	280
Kobi Albert	ATH	5-11/175	Fairfield, AL	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	390
Jordan Anthony	ATH	5-9/160	Tylertown, MS	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	360
Grant Bingham	OT	6-5/321	Paintsville, KY	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	351
Barion Brown	WR	6-1/173	Nashville, TN	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	97
Tomiwa Durojaiye	DL	6-4/250	Middletown, DE	★★★	★★★	★★★	981
Tyreese Fearbry	EDGE	6-5/225	Pittsburgh, PA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	182
Kiyaunta Goodwin	OT	6-8/355	Louisville, KY	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	38
Nikolas Hall	OT	6-6/310	Austin, TX	★★★	★★★	★★★	574
Quentel Jones	DL	6-2/315	Fort Valley, GA	★★★	★★★	★★★	613
Josh Kattus	TE	6-4/235	Cincinnati, OH	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,157
Dane Key	WR	6-3/190	Lexington, KY	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	228
Noah Matthews	DL	6-5/250	Bridgeville, DE	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,290
Elijah Reed	CB	6-3/185	Louisville, KY	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,191
Jackson Smith	K	5-11/170	Danville, KY	★★★	★★★	★★	1,937
Andre Stewart	CB	5-11/174	Atlanta, GA	★★★	★★★★	★★★	525
Keaten Wade	LB	6-4/223	Spring Hill, TN	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	194
Destin Wade	ATH	6-3/205	Spring Hill, TN	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	376
Deone Walker	DL	6-6/350	Detroit, MI	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	303
Brandon White	WR	5-9/165	Cincinnati, OH	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,197

MISSOURI TIGERS

National Forecast: 53 • SEC East Prediction: 6 • Projected Record: 5-7, 2-6 SEC

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Eliah Drinkwitz
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 11-12 (2 years)
CAREER RECORD: 23-13 (3 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Eliah Drinkwitz
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Blake Baker
LOCATION: Columbia, MO
STADIUM: Memorial Stadium (61,620)

KEY TIGERS

ISAIAH MCGUIRE, DE A (literally) big presence at defensive end (6'4", 272), the senior recorded 10 of his 14 tackles for a loss in Missouri's final eight games.

MARTEZ MANUEL, SS The Columbia native is everywhere: He was second on the team in tackles (77), fourth in TFLs (eight) and tied for second in sacks (4.5).

JAVON FOSTER, LT Quick passing and strong tackle play keep opponents' sack totals down — Foster allowed just one sack from the proverbial blind side in 2021.

KEY LOSSES

TYLER BADIE, RB A security blanket in the Mizzou offense, Badie rushed for 1,604 yards in 12 games and caught a team-leading 54 passes.

AKAYLEB EVANS, CB Mizzou struggled with cornerback injuries in 2021, but Evans was a steadying presence, picking off one pass and breaking up six more.

BLAZE ALLDREDGE, LB The Rice transfer made the most of his lone season at Missouri, recording 15 tackles for a loss and 4.5 sacks.

THE VERDICT

Another postseason trip is within reach for Missouri in 2022. It's unlikely one player can replace the production from running back Tyler Badie (161.4 all-purpose yards per game in '21), but the Tigers can lean on a collection of backs to lead an offense with an unsettled QB situation. Wideout Luther Burden III — the prized five-star recruit of the best signing class in school history — will provide an instant boost to the passing game. Eliah Drinkwitz's background on offense suggests he will find the right answers here, but bigger concerns remain for a defense that allowed 6.7 yards per play and 36 points a game in SEC play last year.

BETTORS' BOX

MISSOURI FUTURES

ODDS TO WIN NATIONAL TITLE: 350/1
ODDS TO WIN SEC: 250/1
ODDS TO WIN SEC EAST: 100/1
SEASON WIN O/U: 5.5 (Under -130)
HEISMAN CONTENDERS: None
BETTORS' BYTE: Missouri is just 4-12 ATS in its last 16 conference road games.

Information provided by the Bet the Board staff

In two years under Eliah Drinkwitz, Missouri has been almost perfectly average. They've won nine straight games against teams that finished with a losing record, and they've lost 11 of 12 against power conference teams that didn't. They've had great and terrible moments on both offense and defense.

Drinkwitz has recruited like gangbusters, signing maybe the most highly ranked class in Mizzou history in 2022. That will obviously buy him time before the pressure begins, but he's still trying to figure out what he's got at the quarterback position; he's working with a third defensive coordinator in three years; and he's facing a schedule with eight teams that went bowling a year ago. Maybe he gets the chess pieces lined up in all the right places this season, but it feels more like another "scratch and claw to get to 6–6" type of year.

OFFENSE Safe almost to a fault, Connor Bazelak completed 66 percent of his passes in 21 games under Drinkwitz, but he averaged under 10 yards per completion in 10 of those games and threw only 23 touchdown passes to 17 interceptions. He was only a redshirt sophomore in 2021, and he battled injury, but it was clear when Drinkwitz elected to start backup Brady Cook in the Texas Bowl against Army — Cook went 27-for-34, but at a familiar 8.8 yards per completion — that it was time for something new for both Bazelak and Mizzou.

Bazelak transferred to Indiana, and the Tigers entered 2022 with a blank slate at QB. Cook and another young dual threat, Tyler Macon, battled for the first-string spot in the spring as blue-chip freshman Sam Horn waited to join the race over the summer and Drinkwitz searched through transfer options.

Outside of QB, there's plenty to be excited about. Mizzou returns four starters from a solid line — tackles Javon Foster and Hyrin White (if healthy) are both all-conference candidates. The receiving corps returns explosive senior Tauskie Dove and could quickly reap the dividends of recent recruiting wins. Five-star freshman Luther Burden III joins other former blue-chippers like Dominic Lovett and Mookie Cooper out wide. And while star running back Tyler Badie is gone, backup Elijah Young looked good in the bowl, and transfers Nathaniel Peat (Stanford) and Cody Schrader (a 2,000-yard rusher in Division II) should give Drinkwitz fun options.

There's plenty to like here, but how the QB position develops will determine everything about 2022.

DEFENSE Going back to his lone year at Appalachian State, Drinkwitz has employed four defensive coordinators in four years as a head coach. This time, he's asking 39-year-old Blake Baker to figure things out after Steve Wilks left for the pros after one up-and-down season. Baker is already in his seventh year as a coordinator after four seasons at Louisiana Tech and two at Miami (Fla.), and even though the Tigers ranked 113th in scoring defense last fall, he inherits some exciting pieces.

The Tigers' biggest strengths heading into 2022 appear to be at defensive end and safety. Ends Isaiah Mc-

ISAIAH MCGUIRE

Tim Umphrey

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Louisiana Tech
Sept. 10	at Kansas State
Sept. 17	Abilene Christian
Sept. 24	at Auburn
Oct. 1	Georgia
Oct. 8	at Florida
Oct. 22	Vanderbilt
Oct. 29	at South Carolina
Nov. 5	Kentucky
Nov. 12	at Tennessee
Nov. 19	New Mexico State
Nov. 26	Arkansas

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 6-7, 3-5 SEC

Sept. 4	Central Michigan	W	34-24
Sept. 11	at Kentucky	L	28-35
Sept. 18	SE Missouri State	W	59-28
Sept. 25	at Boston College (ot)	L	34-41
Oct. 2	Tennessee	L	24-62
Oct. 9	North Texas	W	48-35
Oct. 16	Texas A&M	L	14-35
Oct. 30	at Vanderbilt	W	37-28
Nov. 6	at Georgia	L	6-43
Nov. 13	South Carolina	W	31-28
Nov. 20	Florida (ot)	W	24-23
Nov. 26	at Arkansas	L	17-34
Dec. 22	vs. Army #	L	22-24

#Armed Forces Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	29.1 ppg	9	59
Rushing	179.8 ypg	8	49
Passing	233.2 ypg	9	66
Total	413.0 ypg	9	61

DEFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	33.8 ppg	13	113
Rushing	227.4 ypg	14	124
Passing	206.8 ypg	5	29
Total	434.2 ypg	13	105

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
+3	+0.23	4	46

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	28.2	88
Defense	29.1	69
Margin	-0.9	77
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	43.6%	60
Defense	44.6%	94
Margin	-1.0%	84
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	5.9	67
Defense	6.5	112
Margin	-0.6	96
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.1	68
Defense	5.0	125
Margin	-0.9	111
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	2.1	44
Actual	3	41
Margin	+0.9	55

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

0.166

Missouri's defense allowed 0.166 EPA/play (113th in the FBS). Opponents averaged 6.56 yards per play against the Tigers, who ranked 105th nationally in total defense (434.2 ypg).

40.6%

Missouri's rushing offense ranked 57th nationally in efficiency, averaging a 40.6 percent rushing success rate in 2021 and 4.29 yards per rush.

-0.019

Missouri's -0.019 EPA/play on early downs ranked 94th among FBS teams in efficiency. Missouri had a 38.7 percent success rate on early downs.

Guire and Trajan Jeffcoat combined for 24 tackles for a loss and 9.5 sacks last fall, and they'll be joined by North Carolina transfer Tyrone Hopper and young blue-chippers like DJ Wesolak and Travion Ford. At safety, Martez Manuel and Jaylon Carlies combined for five interceptions and seven tackles for a loss, while Kris Abrams-Draine did solid work in the slot. Clemson transfer Joseph Charleston had a strong spring, too, which can only help.

There are question marks elsewhere, however. Last year's top three defensive tackles are all gone, which means that senior Darius Robinson (24 tackles last fall) and transfers like Oklahoma State's Jayden Jernigan and Auburn's Ian Mathews could be asked to contribute a lot. The Tigers' top two cornerbacks are also gone, leaving Abrams-Draine, 2020 starter Ennis Rakestraw Jr. (coming back from an ACL tear), sophomore DJ Jackson and redshirt freshman Dreyden Norwood, a Texas A&M transfer, to figure things out. Strong recruiting and heavy use of the transfer portal have given Mizzou options here, but stars must still emerge despite a revolving door on the defensive coaching staff.

In the linebacking corps, seniors Devin Nicholson and Chad Bailey have proven solid if unspectacular; Florida transfer Ty'Ron Hopper could make an immediate impact here.

SPECIALISTS While offense and defense have been inconsistent under Drinkwitz, special teams have been a bright spot. That should remain the case in 2022. Harrison Mevis returns after making 23-of-25 field goals (14-of-16 over 40 yards), while Sean Koetting (46.7 average in six kicks) likely takes over full time at punter. Abrams-Draine is a strong kick return man, but he could get a push from both Peat and blue-chippers like Burden.

FINAL ANALYSIS After two seasons of treading water, Drinkwitz is still trying to get things figured out in key areas. Maybe 2022 is the year things come together, but it's far from guaranteed, and the schedule isn't much help; it features road games against Kansas State, Auburn, Florida, South Carolina and Tennessee and visits from Georgia, Kentucky and Arkansas. At some point, recruiting could eventually take root and give the Tigers the depth they need to rise in the SEC East standings, but this feels like another season of hoping for six wins and a bowl game.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)				
WR	**1**	**Tauskie Dove (Sr.)**	11	Barrett Banister (Sr.)
WR	3	Luther Burden III (Fr.)	2	Chance Luper (So.)
WR	7	Dominic Lovett (So.)	5	Mookie Cooper (So.)
LT	**76**	**Javon Foster (Sr.)**	64	Bobby Lawrence (Sr.)
LG	**66**	**Connor Wood (Sr.)**	70	EJ Ndoma-Ogar (So.)
C	55	Connor Tollison (Fr.)	62	Bence Polgar (Jr.)
RG	**72**	**Xavier Delgado (Sr.)**	**54**	**Luke Griffin (Jr.)**
RT	**50**	**Hyrin White (Sr.)**	51	Zeke Powell (Sr.)
TE	80	Tyler Stephens (Jr.)	84	Ryan Hoerstkamp (Fr.)
QB	12	Brady Cook (So.)		Sam Horn (Fr.)
RB	8	Nathaniel Peat (Sr.)	4	Elijah Young (Jr.)
DEFENSE (8)				Returning Starters in **BOLD**
DE	**9**	**Isaiah McGuire (Sr.)**	16	Travion Ford (Fr.)
DT	6	Darius Robinson (Sr.)		Marquis Gracial (Fr.)
DT	0	Jayden Jernigan (Sr.)	99	Realus George Jr. (Sr.)
DE	**18**	**Trajan Jeffcoat (Sr.)**	5	Tyrone Hopper (Sr.)
MLB	8	Ty'Ron Hopper (Jr.)	**33**	**Chad Bailey (Sr.)**
WLB	**11**	**Devin Nicholson (Sr.)**	30	Chuck Hicks (Sr.)
CB	**2**	**Ennis Rakestraw Jr. (So.)**	19	Dreyden Norwood (Fr.)
CB	**14**	**Kris Abrams-Draine (Jr.)**	12	DJ Jackson (So.)
NB	13	Daylan Carnell (Fr.)		Isaac Thompson (Fr.)
SS	**3**	**Martez Manuel (Sr.)**	4	Jalani Williams (Jr.)
FS	**1**	**Jaylon Carlies (Jr.)**	28	Joseph Charleston (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	92	Harrison Mevis (Jr.)	**KR**	8	Nathaniel Peat (Sr.)
P	90	Sean Koetting (Sr.)	**PR**	14	Kris Abrams-Draine (Jr.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	**ATT**	**COMP**	**YDS**	**TD**	**INT**
Connor Bazelak	377	246	2,549	16	11
Brady Cook	**58**	**46**	**345**	**2**	**0**
Tyler Macon	**17**	**9**	**143**	**1**	**0**
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Tyler Badie	268	1,604	6.0	14	
Elijah Young	**37**	**162**	**4.4**	**1**	
Dawson Downing	23	152	6.6	1	
Michael Cox	**18**	**150**	**8.3**	**2**	
Brady Cook	**22**	**92**	**4.2**	**1**	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Tyler Badie	54	330	6.1	4	
Keke Chism	41	512	12.5	3	
Tauskie Dove	**38**	**576**	**15.2**	**0**	
Barrett Banister	**31**	**226**	**7.3**	**1**	
JJ Hester	12	225	18.8	2	

KICKING: **Harrison Mevis, 23-25 FGs, 110 pts.**
TACKLES: Blaze Alldredge, 89; **Martez Manuel, 77**
SACKS: **Isaiah McGuire, 6.0**
INTERCEPTIONS: **Jaylon Carlies, 4**

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE TIGERS

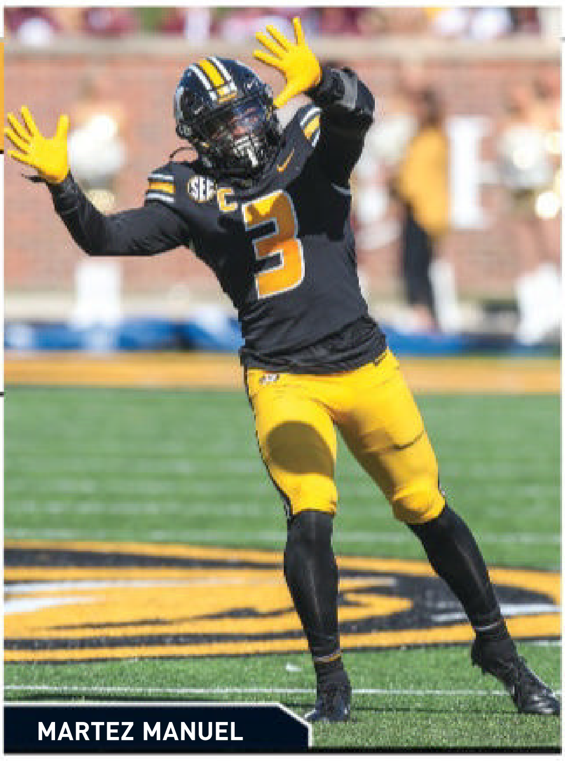
Opposing Coaches Size Up Missouri

"They've got to find a quarterback as soon as possible or it's going to be an ugly year. [Connor] Bazelak leaving for Indiana was a hit, no doubt, but mostly we've heard really good things about their culture. He's made it a point to build recruiting excitement in the Missouri area, which you can't live off of in the SEC, but it's smart. … Get [WR] Luther Burden III involved. Make it big, plug him in and let his play recruit other guys like that. With so much transition this year on offense, they don't have anything to lose. If you want to make a habit of landing guys like that, you have to show proof of concept. … They've got new defensive coaches and a lot of transfers on that side of the ball. That's going to determine if they can go back to a bowl game. They weren't impressive on that side of the ball last year, and they're going to have to get better against the pass. You could run steady on them and hit the big ones passing. It was easy to get them off-balance. … Eli [Drinkwitz] comes off as this kind of nerdy guy, but he's really, really sharp. He has vision, and he's thinking long term there. … This program might really benefit from expansion because the league will almost certainly go to a pod system and get these guys out of the East. This staff could do very well if they played regular games in Texas and more on the West side. They've really been hampered by division play."

OUTSIDE THE HUDDLE

THAT'S AN AWFULLY BIG BURGER Harrison Mevis is one of the best kickers in college football. He's also listed at 5'11", 257 pounds, and as he was proving his worth on the field last fall, he was also reaping the benefits of some creativity in the Name, Image and Likeness field. Columbia's Campus Bar & Grill unveiled a burger in Mevis' honor: the Thiccer Kicker, a double-cheeseburger with two-thirds of a pound of meat, four strips of bacon, an onion ring, special sauce, lettuce and tomato. (If you're watching your figure, you can settle for a Thiccer Kicker T-shirt from the local 573 Tees.)

OPEN COMPETITION Eliah Drinkwitz certainly doesn't want his quarterbacks to be afraid of some healthy competition. He attempted to bring Arizona State quarterback transfer Jayden Daniels to town during the spring (Daniels chose LSU instead), and he brought in Georgia and USC transfer JT Daniels for a visit soon after. Daniels eventually chose West Virginia.


MARTEZ MANUEL

QBS AND TINY SAMPLES The slate isn't blank at quarterback, but the résumés aren't exactly huge. Brady Cook completed 46-of-58 passes in 2021 but gained only 345 yards in the process, while Tyler Macon was thrown into the deep end, seeing most of his work at eventual national champion Georgia and going 6-for-13. Both proved more mobile than Connor Bazelak, at least: They combined for 142 rushing yards and two touchdowns.

A PROLIFIC TRANSFER Drinkwitz has mostly sought transfers from college football powers in the 2022 recruiting cycle — Texas A&M, Clemson, Florida, etc. — but maybe the most interesting transfer comes from Division II. Cody Schrader rushed for 2,074 yards and 25 TDs while catching 22 passes at Truman State in 2021. And in Mizzou's spring game, he led the team with 68 rushing yards and a TD.

ADJUSTMENT PERIOD Transitioning from the NFL to college can be awfully tricky, even for a veteran coach like Steve Wilks. In Wilks' first nine games as Mizzou's defensive coordinator in 2021, the Tigers allowed a miserable 33.8 points per game and 6.4 yards per play. To their credit, Wilks and the Tigers simplified things and rallied, cutting their averages to a perfectly decent 27.3 points per game and 5.3 yards per play over the final four games. Safety Martez Manuel helped spearhead the transformation, and he's a returning captain this season.

RISING STAR

After bouncing between positions as a freshman, **DOMINIC LOVETT** manned the slot all spring and thrived. He gained 127 combined rushing and receiving yards in the spring game, and he could end up making as much of an impact as Luther Burden III, his former high school teammate.

2022 MISSOURI ROSTER

	QUARTERBACKS	**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
12	Cook, Brady	6-2/203	So.	St. Louis, MO
15	Lock, Tommy	6-3/170	Fr.	Lee's Summit, MO
6	Macon, Tyler	5-11/205	Fr.	St. Louis, MO
	RUNNING BACKS	**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
17	Butts, Taj	5-10/221	Fr.	St. Louis, MO
35	Cox, Michael	6-1/234	So.	Atlanta, GA
0	Harris, BJ	5-9/214	So.	Chattanooga, TN
33	Jackson, Bryce	5-7/205	Fr.	Columbia, MO
38	Kreh, Chris	5-9/216	Fr.	Chesterfield, MO
8	Peat, Nathaniel	5-10/198	Sr.	Columbia, MO
20	Schrader, Cody	5-9/217	Sr.	St. Louis, MO
4	Young, Elijah	5-9/186	Jr.	Knoxville, TN
	RECEIVERS	**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
11	Banister, Barrett	6-0/196	Sr.	Fayetteville, AR
3	Burden III, Luther	5-11/210	Fr.	East St. Louis, IL
86	Campbell VI, Wes	6-3/218	Fr.	Atlanta, GA
5	Cooper, Mookie	5-8/186	So.	St. Louis, MO
1	Dove, Tauskie	6-2/198	Sr.	Denton, TX
41	Hahn, Zach	5-11/178	Fr.	St. Louis, MO
7	Lovett, Dominic	5-10/187	So.	East St. Louis, IL
2	Luper, Chance	6-2/185	So.	North Richland Hills, TX
10	Miller, Mekhi	6-1/192	Fr.	Overland Park, KS
82	Muckey, Logan	6-0/209	Fr.	Lee's Summit, MO
85	Nash, Jaden	5-9/192	So.	Jacksonville, AR
	TIGHT ENDS	**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
45	Chepyator, Kibet	6-7/243	Sr.	Carol Steam, IL
81	Hendershot, Shawn	6-3/218	So.	Overland Park, KS
84	Hoerstkamp, Ryan	6-2/235	Fr.	Washington, MO
40	Johanns, Damon	6-2/222	Fr.	Jefferson City, MO
87	McKay, Gavin	6-3/233	Fr.	Memphis, TN
80	Stephens, Tyler	6-6/249	Jr.	Braceville, OH
88	Whisner, Max	6-4/239	Fr.	Kansas City, MO
	OFFENSIVE LINEMEN	**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
72	Delgado, Xavier	6-4/333	Sr.	Glendale, AZ
76	Foster, Javon	6-5/320	Sr.	Detroit, MI
54	Griffin, Luke	6-5/330	Jr.	Chatsworth, GA
69	Heismeyer, Drake	6-3/302	So.	St. Charles, MO
64	Lawrence, Bobby	6-9/328	Sr.	St. Joseph, MO
79	Membou, Armand	6-3/316	Fr.	Lee's Summit, MO
70	Ndoma-Ogar, EJ	6-3/341	So.	Allen, TX
62	Polgar, Bence	6-2/310	Jr.	Wayne, NJ
51	Powell, Zeke	6-5/296	Sr.	Georgiana, AL
65	Sederwall, Trenton	6-4/296	Jr.	Ozark, MO
53	Spencer, Dylan	6-3/337	So.	Jackson, MS
61	Taylor, Richard	6-5/307	Sr.	Ellenwood, GA
55	Tollison, Connor	6-4/311	Fr.	Jackson, MO
75	Walters, Mitchell	6-8/319	So.	St. Louis, MO
50	White, Hyrin	6-7/333	Sr.	Dallas, TX
66	Wood, Connor	6-4/325	Sr.	Meridian, ID
63	Zatechka, Isaac	6-3/290	Fr.	Elkhorn, NE
	DEFENSIVE LINEMEN	**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
16	Ford, Travion	6-2/240	Fr.	St. Louis, MO
99	George Jr., Realus	6-1/288	Sr.	Atlanta, GA
5	Hopper, Tyrone	6-4/252	Sr.	Roswell, GA
18	Jeffcoat, Trajan	6-4/277	Sr.	Columbia, SC
0	Jernigan, Jayden	6-0/261	Sr.	Allen, TX
90	Jones, Jonathan	6-3/264	Fr.	McKinney, TX
91	Mathews, Ian	6-4/302	Fr.	Columbus, GA
9	McGuire, Isaiah	6-4/272	Sr.	Tulsa, OK
81	Meyer, Jack	6-1/226	Fr.	New Melle, MO
32	Montgomery, Ky	6-3/275	Fr.	Indianapolis, IN
6	Robinson, Darius	6-5/300	Sr.	Southfield, MI
97	Robledo, Daniel	6-2/297	Jr.	Tucson, AZ
93	Serrano, Andrew	6-4/246	So.	Chicago, IL
88	Skivers, Jason	6-2/268	Fr.	Independence, MO
15	Walker Jr., Johnny	6-3/241	So.	Tampa, FL
55	Walker, Arden	6-2/253	Fr.	Denver, CO
47	York, Cannon	6-2/267	Sr.	Lebanon, MO
	LINEBACKERS	**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
33	Bailey, Chad	6-0/242	Sr.	Missouri City, TX
52	Garrido, Vic	6-0/215	Fr.	Huntersville, NC
30	Hicks, Chuck	6-1/234	Sr.	San Diego, CA
8	Hopper, Ty'Ron	6-2/220	Jr.	Shelby, NC
31	Lovett, Zach	6-0/233	Fr.	Melbourne, FL
11	Nicholson, Devin	6-2/228	Sr.	Detroit, MI
22	Norris, Will	6-1/237	So.	Columbia, MO
26	Simmons, Xavier	6-2/248	Fr.	Greensboro, NC
10	Wilson, Dameon	6-0/231	Fr.	Grover, NC
	DEFENSIVE BACKS	**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
14	Abrams-Draine, Kris	5-11/178	Jr.	Mobile, AL
36	Butler, Devyn	5-9/175	Jr.	Allen, TX
1	Carlies, Jaylon	6-3/215	Jr.	Orlando, FL
13	Carnell, Daylan	6-2/205	Fr.	Indianapolis, IN
28	Charleston, Joseph	6-0/200	Jr.	Milton, GA
29	Efebera, Justin	5-11/200	So.	Columbus, OH
39	Hayes, Caimin	5-10/188	So.	Philadelphia, PA
17	Hibbler, Tyler	5-11/196	Fr.	St. Louis, MO
12	Jackson, DJ	6-0/194	So.	Dallas, TX
21	Jones, Tyler	5-11/199	So.	Orlando, FL
3	Manuel, Martez	6-0/207	Sr.	Columbia, MO
35	McKeithen, Jarrin	6-0/207	Sr.	Lake St. Louis, MO
19	Norwood, Dreyden	6-0/184	Fr.	Fort Smith, AR
2	Rakestraw Jr., Ennis	6-0/173	So.	West Dallas, TX
24	Scott II, Marcus	5-11/178	Fr.	Conroe, TX
34	Sistrunk, Davion	6-1/171	Fr.	Eau Gallie, FL
4	Williams, Jalani	6-1/185	Jr.	St. Louis, MO
	SPECIALISTS	**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
93	Bauer, Luke (K)	6-5/208	So.	St. Louis, MO
47	Hawthorne, Daniel (LS)	6-0/230	Jr.	West Monroe, LA
49	Hoffman, Jake (LS)	6-3/228	Sr.	Kearney, MO
90	Koetting, Sean (K)	6-4/226	Sr.	Columbia, MO
92	Mevis, Harrison (K)	5-11/257	Jr.	Warsaw, IN
97	Stonehouse, Jack (P)	6-1/187	Fr.	Camarillo, CA

Tim Umphrey

2022 **SIGNEES**

There's no doubt that the Tigers took an important step in recruiting in 2022. In the 2017-21 recruiting cycles, Missouri signed a total of seven four-star recruits, per the 247Sports Composite rankings. In 2022 alone, they signed six four-stars and a five-star.

Head coach Eliah Drinkwitz's impressive haul ranked 15th in the nation per the 247Sports Composite, 11th per ESPN, 15th per On3 and 17th per Rivals. It was quite possibly the most highly touted class in school history —although, in a stark reminder of the uphill battle that the Tigers face in their conference, the class ranked only sixth in the SEC.

While recruiting classes are generally more aligned toward the future than the present, when you include Drinkwitz's heavy use of the transfer portal, recent signings could provide upgrades in quite a few units.

At quarterback, blue-chipper Sam Horn will get plenty of chances to earn the starting job out of the gate. In the skill corps, transfers Nathaniel Peat and Cody Schrader and freshman Tavorus Jones could quickly fill the running back depth chart, while freshman receivers Luther Burden III and Ja'Marion Wayne join a young and increasingly high-upside unit.

On defense, a number of transfers could quickly see the field. The most likely of the bunch are linebacker Ty'Ron Hopper, defensive tackle Jayden Jernigan and defensive backs Joseph Charleston and Dreyden Norwood, but freshmen like tackle Marquis Gracial, end DJ Wesolak and safety Isaac Thompson could carve out roles for themselves, too.

Drinkwitz saw plenty of success in bringing in highly touted prospects from out of state: Among others, Horn is from Suwanee, Georgia, and Jones is from El Paso, Texas.

For Mizzou's long-term prospects, however, Drinkwitz's in-state progress was perhaps more noteworthy.

The Tigers signed three of 247's top five in-state prospects (Gracial, Wesolak and Thompson) and five of the top 10. In all, seven of the Tigers' signees are from in state, and Burden is from across the river in the fertile recruiting grounds of East St. Louis, Ill., home of many former Tiger stars.

Missouri has forever attempted to "seal the borders," which has proven impossible with the number of schools and influences near both the Kansas City and St. Louis areas. But even if it's impossible to land every blue-chipper the state produces, Mizzou must win some of those local battles, and the Tigers did more of that in 2022 than they had in any recent year.

BY POSITION

Offensive Linemen	4
Wide Receivers	3
Defensive Linemen	3
Linebackers	2
Defensive Backs	2
Quarterbacks	1
Running Backs	1
Tight Ends	1

BY STATE

Missouri	7
Illinois	2
Kansas	2
Texas	2
Alabama	1
Georgia	1
Louisiana	1
North Carolina	1

RECRUIT SPOTLIGHT

LUTHER BURDEN III

WR • East St. Louis, IL

Missouri was well on its way to signing a great class before October, but it reached a new level when Luther Burden III came aboard. The top receiver prospect in the country per the 247 Composite and the most decorated Mizzou signee since defensive tackle Terry Beckner Jr. (also from East St. Louis), Burden spent most of his junior year committed to Oklahoma. But he backed off that commitment in August and ended up choosing Mizzou over college football superpowers Alabama and Georgia.

Listed at 5'11" and 210 pounds, Burden is a unique combination of strength and extreme speed. He recorded over 1,100 receiving yards with 20 touchdowns as a senior, and he might have been the greatest punt returner in the history of Illinois high school football: He took nine punts back for touchdowns in 2021. Nine!

Burden reported for spring practice and didn't waste time making an impression, recording 81 receiving yards and a touchdown in the spring game.

A lot of Eliah Drinkwitz's early wins have come at the receiver position. JJ Hester was the only four-star signee in the 2020 class, and he began to find a niche last season (although he has entered the portal). The 2021 class featured both blue-chipper Dominic Lovett (yet another East St. Louis product) and Ohio State transfer Mookie Cooper. Now both Burden and another St. Louis-area star, Ja'Marion Wayne, join the mix. Maybe the most important aspect of the Drinkwitz offense is finding receivers with the ability to take quick passes and create big plays out of them. It's impossible to ignore the potential this unit now has. And while Drinkwitz spent much of the spring trying to keep expectations of Burden to a minimum, that might end up a fruitless endeavor.

Name	Pos	Ht/Wt	Hometown	247	ESPN	Rivals	Nat. Rank
Luther Burden III	WR	5-11/210	East Saint Louis, IL	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	3
Valen Erickson	OT	6-6/280	Chicago, IL	★★★	★★★	★★★	809
Carmycah Glass	EDGE	6-4/210	Monroe, LA	★★★	★★★	★★★	795
Marquis Gracial	DL	6-4/310	Saint Charles, MO	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	144
Sam Horn	QB	6-4/190	Suwanee, GA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	139
Tavorus Jones	RB	5-10/195	El Paso, TX	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	167
Jalen Marshall	DL	6-5/275	Overland Park, KS	★★★	★★★	★★★	702
Armand Membou	OL	6-3/316	Lee's Summit, MO	★★★	★★★	★★★	498
Mekhi Miller	WR	6-1/192	Overland Park, KS	★★★	★★★	★★★	638
Curtis Peagler	OL	6-5/340	Demopolis, AL	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,459
Marcus Scott II	CB	5-11/178	Conroe, TX	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	393
Xavier Simmons	LB	6-2/248	Greensboro, NC	★★★	★★★★	★★★	396
Isaac Thompson	S	6-2/205	St. Louis, MO	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	198
Ja'Marion Wayne	WR	6-3/180	Ballwin, MO	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	276
DJ Wesolak	EDGE	6-3/235	Boonville, MO	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	164
Max Whisner	TE	6-4/239	Kansas City, MO	★★★	★★★	★★★	800
Tristan Wilson	OL	6-5/295	Lebanon, MO	★★★	★★★	★★★	801

SOUTH CAROLINA GAMECOCKS

National Forecast: 42 • SEC East Prediction: 5 • Projected Record: 6-6, 3-5 SEC

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Shane Beamer
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 7-6 (1 year)
CAREER RECORD: 7-6 (1 year)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Marcus Satterfield
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Clayton White
LOCATION: Columbia, SC
STADIUM: Williams-Brice Stadium (77,559)

KEY GAMECOCKS

JOSH VANN, WR Shed anonymity to lead the Gamecocks in catches (43) and receiving yards (679) and tie for the lead in TDs (five) last year.

JAHEIM BELL, TE Began typing his NFL résumé by completing a stellar year with two touchdowns in the Duke's Mayo Bowl victory.

CAM SMITH, CB Second in the SEC in passes defended, Smith broke up 11 throws and intercepted three.

KEY LOSSES

KINGSLEY ENAGBARE, EDGE The senior recorded 44 tackles, a team-best seven for a loss and 4.5 sacks, also collecting 11 of USC's 34 quarterback hurries.

KEVIN HARRIS, RB A slow start due to offseason back surgery limited Harris, but he still piled up a team-high 659 yards and scored four touchdowns on the ground.

JAYLAN FOSTER, S A former walk-on who became an All-American as a senior, Foster led the Gamecocks with 96 tackles and tied for the SEC lead with five interceptions.

THE VERDICT

The Gamecocks finished strong with wins in three of their last five games under first-year head coach Shane Beamer last year, and the momentum continued into the offseason by landing one of the top transfer classes in the nation. Former Oklahoma signal-caller Spencer Rattler highlights the list of incoming additions, and if he can get back on track after an uneven '21, the Gamecocks will be in the mix for a Top 25 finish. A large gap still exists between South Carolina and Georgia at the top of the SEC East. But if Rattler returns to form and the defense improves, another step forward is within reach.

POSTSEASON: Liberty Bowl vs. West Virginia

BETTORS' BOX

SOUTH CAROLINA FUTURES

ODDS TO WIN NATIONAL TITLE: 300/1
ODDS TO WIN SEC: 200/1
ODDS TO WIN SEC EAST: 80/1
SEASON WIN O/U: 5.5 (-110)
HEISMAN CONTENDER: QB Spencer Rattler (75/1)
BETTORS' BYTE: Gamecocks are 8-15-1 ATS in their last 24 games as an underdog but did go 4-5 in that role under Shane Beamer last season.

Information provided by the Bet the Board staff

It was never about wins, although of course it was about wins.

South Carolina head coach Shane Beamer knew that he would only be judged by how many games he won, even in his first season, but he also knew that wins would be hard to come by in 2021. He was taking over the remnants of a program that had won only six games over two seasons, one with a culture that resembled the bottom of a well.

He couldn't worry about victories right away. He had to rebuild the passion, the excitement, the commitment, then start to eye real progress in Year 2.

Beamer did that, in surprisingly short order. Call it a byproduct of Gamecock fans desperately wanting to believe in something after the dismal end of the Will Muschamp Era.

But a funny thing happened on the way to the predicted three-to-four-win season …

The Gamecocks won. Not a whole lot. Not against the teams like Georgia or Clemson that USC really wants to beat. They were blown out four times and had to pull off a miracle comeback to beat Vanderbilt at home.

But as they demolished North Carolina 38–21 in the Duke's Mayo Bowl to finish 7–6, winning three of their last five games, the cheers were back. And Beamer added to it with a strong group of newcomers, again bedecked with transfers, one a former Heisman Trophy favorite who gave USC its most decorated prospect in program history the moment he signed on the dotted line.

"It's a great statement about where we are. To win a bowl game, to go into the offseason — with so much momentum, so much belief with our players — I can't wait for them to go back and get right back to work," Beamer says. "We had some setbacks, certainly. Every Sunday after a loss, you always worry, 'What's the mentality going to be?' Every week, they came back to work."

OFFENSE A year after starting four different quarterbacks, Beamer struck gold by plucking former Oklahoma star quarterback Spencer Rattler from the transfer portal. Rattler, a wunderkind as a freshman and Heisman Trophy front-runner entering last season, lost his job at OU due to too many turnovers last year and decided on a fresh start under a coach with whom he already had a relationship.

The hope is that a true game-changer under center can stabilize an offense that finished 13th in passing, 11th in rushing and 13th in scoring in the SEC last year. Rattler's mobility and NFL arm provide a new dimension to the Gamecocks, but USC knows full well he can't be a one-man show.

The Gamecocks return their entire offensive line, but it was a line that produced just six 100-yard rushing games in 13 tries, and that was with 2020 SEC leading rusher Kevin Harris. It was one of the worst pass-blocking lines in the league and gave up 31 sacks. That will be the biggest question mark.

USC restocked its running backs with Wake Forest transfer Christian Beal-Smith, and it returns MarShawn

JOSH VANN

South Carolina Athletics

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Georgia State
Sept. 10	at Arkansas
Sept. 17	Georgia
Sept. 24	Charlotte
Oct. 1	South Carolina State
Oct. 8	at Kentucky
Oct. 22	Texas A&M
Oct. 29	Missouri
Nov. 5	at Vanderbilt
Nov. 12	at Florida
Nov. 19	Tennessee
Nov. 26	at Clemson

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 7-6, 3-5 SEC

Sept. 4	Eastern Illinois	W	46-0
Sept. 11	at East Carolina	W	20-17
Sept. 18	at Georgia	L	13-40
Sept. 25	Kentucky	L	10-16
Oct. 2	Troy	W	23-14
Oct. 9	at Tennessee	L	20-45
Oct. 16	Vanderbilt	W	21-20
Oct. 23	at Texas A&M	L	14-44
Nov. 6	Florida	W	40-17
Nov. 13	at Missouri	L	28-31
Nov. 20	Auburn	W	21-17
Nov. 27	Clemson	L	0-30
Dec. 30	vs. North Carolina #	W	38-21

#Duke's Mayo Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	22.6 ppg	13	104
Rushing	135.6 ypg	11	93
Passing	201.2 ypg	13	95
Total	336.8 ypg	13	111
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	24.0 ppg	7	46
Rushing	175.0 ypg	11	94
Passing	180.8 ypg	1	7
Total	355.8 ypg	6	41
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
0	0.00	9	70

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	28.6	73
Defense	28.9	65
Margin	-0.3	66
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	39.5%	104
Defense	42.9%	75
Margin	-3.4%	100
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	5.4	97
Defense	5.7	70
Margin	-0.3	91
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	3.3	123
Defense	2.6	3
Margin	+0.7	34
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	2.5	34
Actual	0	65
Margin	-2.5	94

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

-0.139

The Gamecocks held opponents to -0.139 EPA/pass, the ninth-best explosive passing defense in college football. South Carolina had 19 sacks and 10 interceptions on the season.

3.76

South Carolina ranked 118th in averaging 3.76 points per quality possession. The Gamecocks scored 23 touchdowns on 51 quality possessions for the 2021 season.

38.5%

South Carolina's offense had trouble extending drives; the Gamecocks converted just 37.2 percent of third-down attempts, 108th nationally.

Lloyd, a heralded recruit two years ago who missed his entire first season (2020) with a torn ACL. The Gamecocks have other weapons — receiver Josh Vann led the team in catches, yards and touchdowns, while tight end Jaheim Bell was a major contributor, hauling in two TDs in the bowl game — but they can't be utilized if Rattler can't stay upright.

DEFENSE USC had the best pass defense in the SEC last year, but it came with the Gamecocks' dirty little secret: Despite their marvelous gift at recording takeaways (an SEC-high 24 interceptions/recovered fumbles), teams didn't have to pass against USC. Because its run defense was so lousy.

The Gamecocks lost some talent on the edges but return the bulk of their interior line and linebackers, although like the O-line, does that matter if it was so poor last year? The hope is that the two Jordans, Strachan and Burch, can hurry the QB and that Zacch Pickens, Rick Sandidge, Tonka Hemingway and Co. can handle the interior. Sherrod Greene, returning from two years of injuries, can help sixth-year senior Brad Johnson handle the linebacker spots.

The secondary returns Cam Smith, one of the SEC's most underrated players, alongside fellow corner Darius Rush and safety R.J. Roderick. Those three held together a battered unit last year, and Beamer added Devonni Reed (Central Michigan) from the transfer portal.

SPECIALISTS The Gamecocks lost the program's career scoring leader, Parker White, to graduation, but Mitch Jeter, a scholarship kicker, has been prepping for this moment for two years. He is trying to hold off Alex Herrera for placekicking duties. Punter Kai Kroeger has been one of the SEC's best and returns for his junior year.

FINAL ANALYSIS Smiles and fun are back at USC, and with them come raised expectations. Rattler gives the program a spotlight it hasn't had since 2010-13, when it won 42 games under Steve Spurrier. But the trenches are suspect, and the schedule is again murderous (USC's first two SEC games are at Arkansas and hosting defending national champion Georgia).

But Beamer has an infectious enthusiasm for the job and answered any questions about if he'd be overwhelmed with trying to make a historically mediocre program good in his first year. In some ways, it's harder to follow a surprising season with a better one, but Beamer already shut up his critics once.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

WR	**6**	**Josh Vann (Sr.)**	10	Ahmarean Brown (Sr.)
WR	3	Antwane Wells Jr. (Jr.)	17	Xavier Legette (Sr.)
WR	**5**	**Dakereon Joyner (Sr.)**		Corey Rucker (So.)
LT	**52**	**Jaylen Nichols (Sr.)**	55	Jakai Moore (Jr.)
LG	**53**	**Vershon Lee (Jr.)**	60	Jordan Davis (Fr.)
C	**71**	**Eric Douglas (Sr.)**	70	Hank Manos (Sr.)
RG	**54**	**Jovaughn Gwyn (Sr.)**	61	Colin Henrich (So.)
RT	79	Dylan Wonnum (Sr.)	**62**	**Tyshawn Wannamaker (So.)**
TE	0	Jaheim Bell (Jr.)	12	Traevon Kenion (Jr.)
QB	7	Spencer Rattler (Jr.)	9	Luke Doty (Jr.)
RB	1	MarShawn Lloyd (So.)	8	Christian Beal-Smith (Sr.)

DEFENSE (7)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

EDGE	7	Jordan Strachan (Sr.)	13	Gilber Edmond (So.)
DT	**6**	**Zacch Pickens (Sr.)**	94	M.J. Webb (Sr.)
DT	95	Alex Huntley (So.)	91	Tonka Hemingway (Jr.)
EDGE	3	Jordan Burch (Jr.)	92	Tyreek Johnson (Jr.)
MLB	**44**	**Sherrod Greene (Sr.)**	0	Debo Williams (So.)
WLB	**19**	**Brad Johnson (Sr.)**	32	Mohamed Kaba (Jr.)
CB	**24**	**Marcellas Dial (Jr.)**	25	O'Donnell Fortune (So.)
CB	**28**	**Darius Rush (Sr.)**	9	Cam Smith (Jr.)
NB	**9**	**Cam Smith (Jr.)**	29	David Spaulding (Jr.)
S	**10**	**R.J. Roderick (Sr.)**	20	Tyrese Ross (Sr.)
S	8	Devonni Reed (Sr.)	12	Anthony Rose (Fr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	98	Mitch Jeter (Jr.)	**KR**	21	Juju McDowell (So.)
P	39	Kai Kroeger (Jr.)	**PR**	6	Josh Vann (Sr.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Luke Doty	**143**	**86**	**975**	**5**	**3**
Jason Brown	108	60	721	8	6
Zeb Noland	95	53	690	7	1
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Kevin Harris	152	659	4.3	4	
ZaQuandre White	88	583	6.6	2	
Juju McDowell	**52**	**248**	**4.8**	**2**	
MarShawn Lloyd	**64**	**228**	**3.6**	**1**	
Dakereon Joyner	**18**	**77**	**4.3**	**0**	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Josh Vann	**43**	**679**	**15.8**	**5**	
Jaheim Bell	**30**	**497**	**16.6**	**5**	
Dakereon Joyner	**24**	**221**	**9.2**	**1**	
Nick Muse	20	222	11.1	2	
ZaQuandre White	19	202	10.6	3	

KICKING: Parker White, 16-17 FGs, 78 pts.
TACKLES: Jaylan Foster, 96; **Brad Johnson, 74**
SACKS: Kingsley Enagbare, 4.5
INTERCEPTIONS: Jaylan Foster, 5

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE GAMECOCKS

Opposing Coaches Size Up South Carolina

"This is the team to start paying attention to. Shane [Beamer] knows what he's doing, and now he has a quarterback he's familiar with. They're going to be much better than people think in the long run. The question really is how long will that take, and where the ceiling is at with the level of competition they're against in the league and Clemson. But this is a guy who's acting a lot like his Dad did when he built Virginia Tech out of nothing. They don't talk about the challenge; they're looking for those four or five things that can work for them and not wasting time on the things they can't do. … The kid [Spencer Rattler] has a lot of raw talent, and I don't think Oklahoma was as crisp as we usually expect on offense last year, but it's hard to just blame his environment or just blame him. We'll find out pretty fast. … They don't have a lot of identifiable playmakers on offense, but the bigger concern is the defense. That's what's keeping them back right now; that's what could swing those few conference games and get them to eight or nine wins they can turn into recruiting momentum. … There's a chance in this new portal era where Spencer blows up, they work the portal to get some big-time guys in for next year, and all of a sudden they're really taking off."

OUTSIDE THE HUDDLE

MOTIVATION Nobody at USC had a bigger bull's-eye on his chest last year than offensive coordinator Marcus Satterfield. Although the Gamecocks were extremely beaten up, when USC struggled to score, it really struggled to score. Satterfield plainly addressed the problems and took all the blame. "I don't know everything," he said. "We had to go through some stuff to come out on the other end better." Satterfield had a unique way of recruiting Spencer Rattler to come play for him, after Rattler lost his starting job at Oklahoma. "When we started talking, I told him, 'Everybody in the country thinks you stink as a quarterback,'" Satterfield said. "And everybody in the country thinks I stink, so let's go at it with the biggest chips on our shoulders that we possibly can get and let's go attack this thing every single day."

SPENCER RATTLER

South Carolina Athletics

STICKING AROUND The Gamecocks lost two assistant coaches (Mike Peterson to Florida and Erik Kimrey to a prep head-coaching job), but several others turned down Power 5 offers to stay. "I believe in what we're doing here," DBs coach Torrian Gray says.

I'M SUPER, THANKS FOR ASKING USC has 15 "super" seniors on the roster as the effects of the NCAA's "COVID season" continue to be felt. Five will become five-year letter-winners at USC, joining the three who were the first to do it last year.

STABLE UNDER CENTER The Gamecocks started Zeb Noland, Jason Brown, Luke Doty and Dakereon Joyner at quarterback last year, the first time they've started that many different QBs in a season since 1981. The hope is that Rattler can remain the starter throughout this season. Noland, his eligibility exhausted, is back in the same graduate assistant role he had before becoming starting QB last year. Brown transferred to Virginia Tech. Doty is expected to be Rattler's top backup, and while Joyner is still around and may take snaps, he is now a receiver by trade.

NOTICEABLE The Gamecocks scored an average of 29.9 points in their wins last year and 14.2 in their losses. Their average margin of defeat was 20.2 points.

RISING STAR

SPENCER RATTLER is new to USC, but everyone knows his name. He's the highest-rated quarterback ever to pledge to the Gamecocks. As the near-automatic starter, he's expected to resume the Heisman Trophy candidacy he held at the start of last season at Oklahoma.

2022 SOUTH CAROLINA ROSTER

QUARTERBACKS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
11	Davis, Braden	6-6/198	Fr.	Middletown, DE
9	Doty, Luke	6-1/210	Jr.	Myrtle Beach, SC
4	Gauthier, Colten	6-3/217	Fr.	Bethlehem, GA
28	Helfrich, Jake	6-0/190	Fr.	Charlotte, NC
29	Lee, Hayden	5-11/195	So.	Roebuck, SC
7	Rattler, Spencer	6-1/210	Jr.	Phoenix, AZ

RUNNING BACKS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
23	Amos, Rashad	6-2/227	So.	Fayetteville, GA
8	Beal-Smith, Christian	5-9/205	Sr.	Winston-Salem, NC
14	Carroll, Lovasea	6-2/200	Fr.	Warrenton, GA
32	Dunn, Bradley	5-9/210	So.	Columbia, SC
26	Harris-Waynick, Nathan	5-10/205	Fr.	Sumter, SC
1	Lloyd, MarShawn	5-9/212	So.	Wilmington, DE
21	McDowell, Juju	5-9/178	So.	Leesburg, GA
27	Twitty, D.J.	6-0/225	Sr.	Inman, SC

RECEIVERS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
89	Blake, O'Mega	6-3/185	Fr.	Rock Hill, SC
10	Brown, Ahmarean	5-9/165	Sr.	Tampa, FL
5	Joyner, Dakereon	6-1/210	Sr.	North Charleston, SC
17	Legette, Xavier	6-0/217	Sr.	Mullins, SC
85	Mangrum, Payton	6-0/198	So.	Greenville, SC
81	Morton, Aaron	5-8/177	Fr.	Cincinnati, OH
24	Rice, Eriq	6-1/198	Fr.	Columbia, SC
19	Rollins, Ben	5-9/160	So.	Inman, SC
	Rucker, Corey	6-1/190	So.	Yazoo City, MS
86	Terrell, Chad	6-3/222	Sr.	Bogue Chitto, MS
6	Vann, Josh	5-11/192	Sr.	Tucker, GA
3	Wells Jr., Antwane	6-1/205	Jr.	Richmond, VA

TIGHT ENDS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
49	Adams, Dave	6-2/228	So.	Gadsden, SC
	Adkins, Nate	6-3/226	Sr.	Knoxville, TN
0	Bell, Jaheim	6-3/230	Jr.	Lake City, FL
12	Kenion, Traevon	6-4/245	Jr.	Monroe, NC
88	Sanders, Jesse	6-3/245	So.	Aiken, SC
	Stogner, Austin	6-6/262	Sr.	Plano, TX

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
68	Campbell, Wyatt	6-6/310	Sr.	Elgin, SC
60	Davis, Jordan	6-5/310	Fr.	Fairburn, GA
71	Douglas, Eric	6-4/297	Sr.	Charlotte, NC
54	Gwyn, Jovaughn	6-3/300	Sr.	Charlotte, NC
65	Hall, Jackson	6-3/295	Fr.	Honea Path, SC
77	Henrich, Colin	6-3/308	Fr.	Leesburg, VA
72	Jones, Trai	6-2/307	So.	Abbeville, SC
53	Lee, Vershon	6-4/309	Jr.	Woodbridge, VA
70	Manos, Hank	6-4/303	Sr.	Chapin, SC
55	Moore, Jakai	6-6/310	Jr.	Nokesville, VA
64	Morgan, JonDarius	6-3/312	Fr.	Birmingham, AL
52	Nichols, Jaylen	6-5/322	Sr.	Charlotte, NC
62	Wannamaker, Tyshawn	6-3/308	So.	St. Matthews, SC
79	Wonnum, Dylan	6-5/305	Sr.	Tucker, GA

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
93	Barrett, Nick	6-3/327	So.	Goldsboro, NC
3	Burch, Jordan	6-6/275	Jr.	Columbia, SC
4	Dawkins, Terrell	6-4/252	Jr.	Concord, NC
13	Edmond, Gilber	6-5/255	So.	Fort Pierce, FL
16	Fitten, Hot Rod	6-2/255	Jr.	Atlanta, GA
33	Frazier, Kaleb	6-3/210	Jr.	Ridgeland, SC
91	Hemingway, Tonka	6-3/292	Jr.	Conway, SC
50	Hixon, Felix	6-3/300	Fr.	Jackson, GA
95	Huntley, Alex	6-4/305	So.	Blythewood, SC
92	Johnson, Tyreek	6-3/265	Jr.	Sumter, SC
99	Martin, D'Andre	6-4/305	Fr.	Durham, NC
6	Pickens, Zacch	6-4/305	Sr.	Anderson, SC
90	Sanders, T.J.	6-5/300	Fr.	Marion, SC
5	Sandidge, Rick	6-5/302	Sr.	Concord, NC
7	Strachan, Jordan	6-5/243	Sr.	Kingsland, GA
51	Strickland, Chuck	6-2/262	So.	Spartanburg, SC
94	Webb, M.J.	6-3/312	Sr.	Rutledge, GA
54	Whyce, Jamaal	6-3/300	Fr.	Miami, FL

LINEBACKERS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
45	Bryant, Colin	6-3/220	Fr.	Mount Pleasant, SC
41	Colasurdo, Andrew	6-1/240	Fr.	Inman, SC
44	Greene, Sherrod	6-1/225	Sr.	Rocky Mount, NC
19	Johnson, Brad	6-2/238	Sr.	Pendleton, SC
32	Kaba, Mohamed	6-2/235	Jr.	Clinton, NC
22	Martin-Scott, Bam	6-2/235	Jr.	Fort Wayne, IN
40	Porter, Ronnie	6-1/230	Fr.	Columbia, SC
42	Ware, Darryle	6-1/228	So.	Charleston, SC
15	Westmoreland, Donovan	6-1/225	Fr.	Griffin, GA
0	Williams, Debo	6-1/235	So.	Smyrna, DE

DEFENSIVE BACKS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
46	Abrams, Noah	5-10/182	Fr.	Powder Springs, GA
39	Alexander Jr., Cornelius	6-0/185	So.	Columbia, SC
43	Byrnes, Joseph	6-0/190	Fr.	Camden, SC
17	Craig, La'Dareyen	6-1/175	Fr.	Mobile, AL
24	Dial, Marcellas	6-0/190	Jr.	Woodruff, SC
47	Ford, King-Demenian	6-2/205	So.	Blythewood, SC
25	Fortune, O'Donnell	6-1/183	So.	Sumter, SC
36	Gibson, B.J.	6-4/220	Sr.	Marietta, GA
26	Grier, Landon	5-9/177	So.	Fort Lauderdale, FL
34	Hardy, Cam	6-1/192	Fr.	Frisco, TX
14	Hunter, Joey	6-1/195	So.	Atlanta, GA
27	Morris, Joseph	6-0/190	Fr.	Camden, SC
23	Norris, Isaiah	5-11/183	Jr.	Anderson, SC
8	Reed, Devonni	5-11/200	Sr.	Detroit, MI
10	Roderick, R.J.	6-0/207	Sr.	Summerville, SC
12	Rose, Anthony	6-1/185	Fr.	Miami, FL
20	Ross, Tyrese	6-0/200	Sr.	Jacksonville, FL
28	Rush, Darius	6-2/196	Sr.	Kingstree, SC
9	Smith, Cam	6-0/185	Jr.	Blythewood, SC
29	Spaulding, David	6-1/195	Jr.	Riceboro, GA
31	Williams, Peyton	6-0/197	Fr.	Heath, TX

SPECIALISTS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
34	Bailey, Matthew (LS)	6-2/212	Jr.	Deland, FL
40	Herrera, Alex (K/P)	6-0/190	Jr.	Columbia, SC
98	Jeter, Mitch (K)	5-10/195	Jr.	Salisbury, NC
45	Joyce, William (K/P)	6-3/220	Fr.	Spartanburg, SC
39	Kroeger, Kai (P)	6-4/200	Jr.	Lake Forest, IL
30	Luckhurst, Jack (K)	6-3/175	Jr.	Santa Barbara, CA
46	Rasmussen, Cole (LS)	5-11/210	So.	Fort Mill, SC
36	Rogers, Hunter (LS)	6-1/200	So.	Columbia, SC

2022 **SIGNEES**

The Gamecocks' recruiting class, like it was a year ago, was highlighted by transfers.

Quarterback Spencer Rattler (Oklahoma) is the highest-rated newcomer and immediately gives the Gamecocks a marquee player. He could be the cure for what was often a punchless offense last year, and he brought tight end Austin Stogner with him.

Devonni Reed (Central Michigan) can step right in at safety, while Antwane "Juice" Wells Jr. (James Madison) and Corey Rucker (Arkansas State) are receivers who will factor in. Running backs Christian Beal-Smith (Wake Forest) and Lovasea Carroll (Georgia), a one-time USC commit who won a national championship with the Bulldogs last year but had to play defensive back to do it, add depth to a position that lost its top two rushers.

NC State defensive end Terrell Dawkins completed the transfer class, and USC also helped its secondary with safeties Peyton Williams, Keenan Nelson Jr., Emory Floyd Jr. and Anthony Rose. The Gamecocks flipped linebacker Stone Blanton, an Ole Miss commit for football and baseball, and got Donovan Westmoreland over Tennessee, Georgia and Mississippi State.

Receiver Landon Samson comes to USC from Texas prep power Southlake Carroll, although he didn't enroll until summer. Freshmen QBs Braden Davis and Tanner Bailey both committed to USC and will compete for the starting job when Rattler leaves.

The Gamecocks got three offensive linemen, a solid number, but they are going to face massive defections from their present OL group once the COVID-year asterisks are removed. Plus, USC's line was so leaky last year that some of the newbies may be relied on to play right away, depriving them of a year to get stronger in the usual SEC redshirt system.

It could always be better, but it could have been much, much worse. Shane Beamer said as much.

"Pretty much every single guy was committed to us this summer. And stayed committed to us," Beamer said. "Let's not lose sight of who we beat to get these guys committed to us back in the summertime and that we were able to keep them Gamecocks. We got guys that want to be Gamecocks."

BY POSITION

Defensive Backs	6
Defensive Linemen	5
Wide Receivers	3
Offensive Linemen	3
Quarterbacks	2
Linebackers	2
Athletes	1

BY STATE

Georgia	5
South Carolina	5
Florida	4
Pennsylvania	2
Texas	2
Alabama	1
Delaware	1
Mississippi	1
North Carolina	1

RECRUIT SPOTLIGHT

RYAN BRUBAKER
OL • Stevens, PA

South Carolina wasn't surprised to hear that offensive line recruit Ryan Brubaker played multiple sports in high school. That's common.

Until they saw the tape.

"I mean, the very first thing on his HUDL film is swimming highlights, and it caught my eye," USC offensive line coach Greg Adkins says. "I thought it was pretty amazing."

Brubaker stands 6'6" and weighs 280 pounds. The son of a former Big Ten O-lineman who now coaches the O-line in high school, he chose the Gamecocks over Tennessee, Penn State and Stanford.

He swims? Yep. Specializes in the 50 freestyle and 100-meter backstroke. Once came from behind to win the 200 individual medley.

Brubaker began swimming before he ever got serious about football. And he also chucks the shot put and hurls the discus for the track and field squad.

He swam in high school because he loved to but then figured out that that part of his athletic career was making him stand out from the crowd in terms of his recruiting. A coach may see 100 line prospects in one day. They may find one in a year who was on the swim team.

"And then obviously as his film turned on from a football standpoint — actually, I believe it had him running a 400-meter after that in a big-man relay on the track team — this guy is a competitor in everything that he does," Adkins says. "He goes from football to swimming, which we all know how tough that is, to track. Highly motivated to be the best he can be on and off the field."

Name	Pos	Ht/Wt	Hometown	247	ESPN	Rivals	Nat. Rank
Tanner Bailey	QB	6-1/195	Gordo, AL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	216
Kajuan Banks	S	5-10/170	Tallahassee, FL	★★★	★★★★	★★★	591
Stone Blanton	LB	6-2/220	Jackson, MS	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	286
Ryan Brubaker	OT	6-6/280	Stevens, PA	★★★	★★★	★★★	551
Braden Davis	QB	6-6/198	Middletown, DE	★★★	★★★★	★★★	385
Nick Emmanwori	S	6-3/208	Irmo, SC	★★★	★★★	★★★★	438
Emory Floyd Jr.	S	6-1/165	Marietta, GA	★★★	★★★	★★★★	421
Cason Henry	OT	6-6/290	Marietta, GA	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,043
Felix Hixon	DL	6-3/300	Jackson, GA	★★★	★★★	★★★	605
Kylic Horton	WR	6-3/180	Santee, SC	★★★	★★★	★★★	859
Grayson Mains	OT	6-5/265	Cumming, GA	★★★	★★★	★★★	759
D'Andre Martin	DL	6-4/305	Durham, NC	★★★	★★★	★★	1,298
Keenan Nelson Jr.	S	6-1/200	Philadelphia, PA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	218
Anthony Rose	S	6-1/185	Miami, FL	★★★	★★★	★★★★	404
Landon Samson	WR	6-1/180	Southlake, TX	★★★	★★★	★★★★	419
Zavier Short	WR	6-2/208	Chapin, SC	★★★	★★★	★★	1,503
DeQuandre Smith	ATH	6-2/208	Columbia, SC	★★★	★★★	★★	1,138
Bryan Thomas Jr.	EDGE	6-3/225	Windermere, FL	★★★	★★★	★★★	998
Demetrius Watson	DL	6-3/285	Charleston, SC	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,126
Donovan Westmoreland	LB	6-1/225	Griffin, GA	★★★	★★★	★★★	412
Jamaal Whyce	DL	6-3/300	Miami, FL	★★★	★★★	★★★	829
Peyton Williams	S	6-0/197	Heath, TX	★★★	★★★★	★★★	451

TENNESSEE VOLUNTEERS

National Forecast: 18 • SEC East Prediction: 2 • Projected Record: 8-4, 4-4 SEC

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Josh Heupel
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 7-6 (1 year)
CAREER RECORD: 35-14 (4 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Alex Golesh
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tim Banks
LOCATION: Knoxville, TN
STADIUM: Neyland Stadium (102,455)

KEY VOLUNTEERS

HENDON HOOKER, QB Hooker had a massive first season with the Vols, throwing for 2,945 yards and 31 touchdowns with only three interceptions.

CEDRIC TILLMAN, WR Tillman caught touchdowns in each of Tennessee's final seven games in a breakout season. He had three touchdowns in the Music City Bowl.

JEREMY BANKS, LB Banks turned his intense playing style into significant production, racking up 128 tackles in the middle of the UT defense.

KEY LOSSES

THEO JACKSON, S Jackson was a staple of Tennessee's secondary in his final three seasons but was at his best in 2021. He had 78 tackles and nine tackles for a loss.

VELUS JONES JR., WR Jones was a highly productive receiver for the Vols out of the slot, recording 62 catches for 807 yards and seven touchdowns.

MATTHEW BUTLER, DT Butler turned into a force in his senior season with the Vols, recording 8.5 tackles for loss and five sacks.

THE VERDICT

Josh Heupel has Tennessee trending in the right direction going into 2022. Led by quarterback Hendon Hooker, the Volunteers jumped from three wins in 2020 to seven in 2021 behind an offense that averaged 39.3 points per game last year — a huge jump from the 21.5 points per contest the Vols averaged in '20. Hooker's supporting cast has some new faces, but this unit should once again rank near the top of the SEC. How far a defense that allowed 33.6 points per game in SEC play last year can progress is likely to decide just how high the Vols climb in the Top 25.

POSTSEASON: Citrus Bowl vs. Wisconsin

BETTORS' BOX

TENNESSEE FUTURES

ODDS TO WIN NATIONAL TITLE: 60/1
ODDS TO WIN SEC: 30/1
ODDS TO WIN SEC EAST: 10/1
SEASON WIN O/U: 8 (-110)
HEISMAN CONTENDER: QB Hendon Hooker (60/1)
BETTORS' BYTE: The Vols went 10-3 Over the total in Josh Heupel's first season; they went 3-7 Over the total in 2020.

Information provided by the Bet the Board staff

Josh Heupel walked into a tumultuous Vols program when Tennessee hired him in January 2021. Jeremy Pruitt had been fired weeks prior, and the Vols faced a mass exodus through the transfer portal.

Heupel flipped the culture, brought in transfers and developed the current roster to turn in an impressive first season with record-setting offense and overachieving defense.

Heupel is one of only four UT coaches since 1941 to win at least seven regular-season games in his first season. There's optimism for the encore, especially with the return of quarterback Hendon Hooker and wide receiver Cedric Tillman. "There is so much known versus a year ago, when everything was unknown," Heupel says.

OFFENSE Heupel injected life into the Tennessee program with his up-tempo offense. The Vols scored 39.3 points per game and set many single-season program records, including points, total yards and touchdowns.

They'll chase more records with Hooker and Tillman back. Hooker, who took over the starting job early in the season, had the best single-season passer rating in program history and ranked third nationally. He's on the fringe of the Heisman conversation after throwing 31 TDs and only three interceptions and rushing for five scores.

Tillman (64 catches, 1,081 yards and 12 touchdowns) is the top target in a wide receiver room that has mostly unproven potential. The Vols are counting on Jalin Hyatt (21 catches, 226 yards, two touchdowns) to make a junior jump to offset the departures of Velus Jones Jr. and JaVonta Payton. Jimmy Calloway or Ramel Keyton could step up. Chas Nimrod, Kaleb Webb and Marquarius White are exciting freshmen. Jacon Warren and Princeton Fant give Tennessee steady play at tight end.

Tennessee's rushing attack was a pleasant surprise. Jabari Small (796 yards, nine TDs) is the standout returner from a group that produced 217.8 yards per game. Sophomore Jaylen Wright is the No. 2. Freshman Justin Williams-Thomas could be hard to keep off the field.

The position that can take Tennessee's offense to a different level is the offensive line. The unit dealt with injuries in 2021 and allowed 44 sacks, the most in the SEC. If it can be a solid group, the Vols will have a potential juggernaut offensively. UT returns four starters, including long-time tackle Darnell Wright and guard Jerome Carvin. Right tackle is the question mark after Cade Mays' departure.

DEFENSE Tennessee's defense improved in 2021 thanks to late-career development from defensive tackle Matthew Butler and defensive backs Theo Jackson and Alontae Taylor. All three are now gone.

UT has defined strengths and weaknesses, the latter of which were Heupel's focus in the spring. The Vols did well in getting into the backfield with a program-record 102 tackles for a loss. But they struggled on third downs and against the pass, allowing opponents to convert 42.1 percent on third downs and 273.2 passing yards per game to rank last in the SEC.

HENDON HOOKER

Harrison McClary

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	Ball State
Sept. 10	at Pittsburgh
Sept. 17	Akron
Sept. 24	Florida
Oct. 8	at LSU
Oct. 15	Alabama
Oct. 22	Tennessee-Martin
Oct. 29	Kentucky
Nov. 5	at Georgia
Nov. 12	Missouri
Nov. 19	at South Carolina
Nov. 26	at Vanderbilt

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 7-6, 4-4 SEC

Sept. 2	Bowling Green	W	38-6
Sept. 11	Pittsburgh	L	34-41
Sept. 18	Tennessee Tech	W	56-0
Sept. 25	at Florida	L	14-38
Oct. 2	at Missouri	W	62-24
Oct. 9	South Carolina	W	45-20
Oct. 16	Ole Miss	L	26-31
Oct. 23	at Alabama	L	24-52
Nov. 6	at Kentucky	W	45-42
Nov. 13	Georgia	L	17-41
Nov. 20	South Alabama	W	60-14
Nov. 27	Vanderbilt	W	45-21
Dec. 30	vs. Purdue # (ot)	L	45-48

#Music City Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	39.3 ppg	2	7
Rushing	217.8 ypg	2	11
Passing	257.1 ypg	4	40
Total	474.9 ypg	3	9

DEFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	29.1 ppg	12	90
Rushing	148.5 ypg	8	59
Passing	273.2 ypg	14	122
Total	421.7 ypg	12	99

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
+3	+0.23	4	46

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	30.8	24
Defense	27.8	37
Margin	+3.0	20
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	47.8%	20
Defense	41.7%	58
Margin	+6.1%	32
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	6.5	21
Defense	5.5	49
Margin	+1.0	29
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.7	20
Defense	4.3	85
Margin	+0.4	55
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	-0.3	77
Actual	3	41
Margin	+3.3	38

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

0.139

The Volunteers averaged 0.139 EPA/play on first and second downs in 2021, 12th best in the nation. Their overall offensive success rate of 44.6 percent ranked 17th in the FBS.

4.89

Tennessee's defense allowed 4.89 points per quality possession (108th). The defense allowed 59 plays of 20-plus yards and a 52.6 percent quality possession rate, 112th and 97th in the FBS, respectively.

56.1%

On offense, the Vols generated quality possessions at a rate of 56.1 percent, 18th best in the nation.

The Vols will need familiar faces to elevate their play to a different level to improve those weaknesses.

The backbone of Tennessee's defense is a pair of big-time edge rushers. Byron Young (11.5 tackles for a loss, 5.5 sacks) was a star and finished the season playing well. Tyler Baron is back across from Young after briefly entering the transfer portal. Heupel wants to see more consistent pressure from the pass rush, which starts with Baron and Young on the edge.

The safety position is ready to rise and steady the secondary with experienced returners Trevon Flowers and Jaylen McCollough. The duo accounted for five interceptions. Sophomore Christian Charles will push for playing time, and Tennessee added transfers Andre Turrentine (Ohio State) and Wesley Walker (Georgia Tech).

Cornerback development is essential for the Vols, and Tennessee's ceiling could hinge upon it. Senior Warren Burrell is a returning starter. Kamal Hadden, Brandon Turnage, De'Shawn Rucker and junior college transfer Desmond Williams are in the mix. Doneiko Slaughter is the leader to replace Jackson at the Star position.

Linebacker is more stable than a season ago when injuries, transfers and inexperience plagued the group. Jeremy Banks led UT with 128 tackles as a junior, turning his on-field intensity into big numbers. Aaron Beasley and Solon Page III have developed. Juwan Mitchell is a potential X-factor for the defense after battling injuries.

Omari Thomas, Da'Jon Terry and Elijah Simmons, a 6'2", 350-pound behemoth, are the top choices to replace Butler's interior production. Thomas was steady in the back half of his sophomore season. LaTrell Bumphus and Kurott Garland are keys on the defensive line.

Keep an eye on freshmen Joshua Josephs, James Pearce and Tyre West in the front seven.

SPECIALISTS Tennessee has stability with its core specialists. Paxton Brooks posted a career-best 44 yards per punt. Kicker Chase McGrath was consistent on field goals inside 40 yards. UT has explosive options to replace lost production in the return game.

FINAL ANALYSIS There's reason to think the Vols will be better in 2022, especially if players step up at cornerback and on the defensive line. Tennessee knows its core pieces offensively, and Hooker-to-Tillman is as exciting a duo as UT has had in some time. Heupel's first-year success stemmed from individual improvement leading to collective growth. That'll be the key again for the Vols to make a jump.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)

WR	**4**	**Cedric Tillman (Sr.)**	9	Jimmy Calloway (So.)
WR	80	Ramel Keyton (Sr.)	19	Walker Merrill (So.)
WR	11	Jalin Hyatt (Jr.)	83	Marquarius White (Fr.)
LT	**58**	**Darnell Wright (Sr.)**	53	Jeremiah Crawford (Sr.)
LG	**75**	**Jerome Carvin (Sr.)**	78	Ollie Lane (Sr.)
C	**63**	**Cooper Mays (Jr.)**	72	Addison Nichols (Fr.)
RG	**76**	**Javontez Spraggins (Jr.)**	54	Kingston Harris (Sr.)
RT	66	Dayne Davis (Jr.)	51	Gerald Mincey (So.)
TE	87	Jacob Warren (Sr.)	**88**	**Princeton Fant (Sr.)**
QB	**5**	**Hendon Hooker (Sr.)**	7	Joe Milton III (Sr.)
RB	**2**	**Jabari Small (Jr.)**	20	Jaylen Wright (So.)

DEFENSE (6)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	9	Tyler Baron (Jr.)	20	Bryson Eason (So.)
DT	11	LaTrell Bumphus (Sr.)	95	Da'Jon Terry (Jr.)
DT	21	Omari Thomas (Jr.)	51	Elijah Simmons (Jr.)
DE	**6**	**Byron Young (Sr.)**	30	Roman Harrison (Sr.)
MLB	**24**	**Aaron Beasley (Sr.)**	10	Juwan Mitchell (Sr.)
WLB	**33**	**Jeremy Banks (Sr.)**	38	Solon Page III (Sr.)
CB	**4**	**Warren Burrell (Sr.)**	25	Desmond Williams (Jr.)
CB	13	Kamal Hadden (Jr.)	28	De'Shawn Rucker (So.)
STAR	0	Doneiko Slaughter (Jr.)	29	Brandon Turnage (Jr.)
S	**1**	**Trevon Flowers (Sr.)**	12	Tamarion McDonald (Jr.)
S	**22**	**Jaylen McCollough (Sr.)**	14	Christian Charles (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	40	Chase McGrath (Sr.)	**KR**	6	Jimmy Holiday (Jr.)
P	37	Paxton Brooks (Sr.)	**PR**	9	Jimmy Calloway (So.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Hendon Hooker	**303**	**206**	**2,945**	**31**	**3**
Joe Milton III	**62**	**32**	**375**	**2**	**0**
Harrison Bailey	7	3	16	0	0
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Jabari Small	**141**	**796**	**5.6**	**9**	
Hendon Hooker	**166**	**616**	**3.7**	**5**	
Tiyon Evans	81	525	6.5	6	
Jaylen Wright	**85**	**409**	**4.8**	**4**	
Len'Neth Whitehead	**32**	**207**	**6.5**	**2**	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Cedric Tillman	**64**	**1,081**	**16.9**	**12**	
Velus Jones Jr.	62	807	13.0	7	
Jalin Hyatt	**21**	**226**	**10.8**	**2**	
JaVonta Payton	18	413	22.9	6	
Jacob Warren	**18**	**179**	**9.9**	**3**	

KICKING: **Chase McGrath, 12-16 FGs, 102 pts.**
TACKLES: **Jeremy Banks, 128; Aaron Beasley, 84**
SACKS: **Jeremy Banks, 5.5; Byron Young, 5.5**
INTERCEPTIONS: **Jaylen McCollough, 3**

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE VOLUNTEERS

Opposing Coaches Size Up Tennessee

"This seems like the team that everyone's in love with, at least after one season. Any time Tennessee does well, even if it's clearly because of a one-off situation, there's an immediate pressure to ramp back up to the Phillip Fulmer national title days. … They're pretty easy to break down because that offense is pretty easy to break down: You're a six-win team if your quarterback is decent, and you've got a two- or three-game ceiling if he can make plays. Having [Joe] Milton as the backup is a big luxury; you don't want to be rotating them at all, but if you have an injury, you've got a guy with game reps in the system, which is rare in the portal era. … Overall, the defense is average at best for that division, but that's a luxury Josh Heupel's system offers because it can hide them a little bit. … They're missing a really dynamic playmaker right now. Finding that at receiver with one of the signees could be huge for them. … When this staff came in, there was a pretty strong criticism of the simplicity they used at UCF. They did a good job adjusting in some games, but it will be interesting to watch how they advance and wrinkle their stuff as defenses get more and more tape on them. … Give them credit — they've got an identity for the first time in years, and the scheme has kept them in games against teams with way more talent, especially at places where it matters most in this league, like the line of scrimmage."

OUTSIDE THE HUDDLE

HOOKER THE AUTHOR Hendon Hooker was busy on the field and off it during his first season with Tennessee. The Vols quarterback wrote a faith-based book, "The ABCs of Scripture for Athletes," with his brother, Alston. Each page contains a letter and a corresponding scripture. The Hookers' book is tailored for young athletes in a comic-book style. "These are a few of the scriptures we live by, to stay encouraged while pursuing the sport that we love," Hooker wrote when he announced the book in November.

TAKING A FLYER Byron Young had a winding path to Tennessee that featured a stop at a fledging prep school and retail jobs. His journey changed when he picked up a flyer for an open tryout at Georgia Military College. "I made the team," Young says. "Three weeks later, I was playing spring ball." The 6'3", 245-pound Young earned offers from a handful of SEC schools before picking Tennessee.

BYRON YOUNG

Harrison McClary

FAMILIAR NAME The Vols brought in a quarterback with a familiar Tennessee name to add depth. Navy Shuler transferred from Appalachian State to UT as a walk-on in December. Shuler is the son of quarterback Heath Shuler, who played at Tennessee from 1991-93 before being drafted No. 3 overall by Washington in the 1994 NFL Draft. Navy, a 6-foot, 206-pounder, was a three-star prospect in the 2020 class.

ALL BUSINESS Vols walk-on wide receiver Grant Frerking has been a businessman for some time and has parlayed his knowledge into the NIL world. He is the president of NIL University (NIL U) and works with On3 as well. His knowledge is especially valuable for Tennessee players in navigating this new world.

BIGGER AND BETTER Jalin Hyatt admitted he was complacent after a strong freshman season in 2020. The WR had an inconsistent role in 2021, but he plans to change that. One of his key moves was changing his body. The 6'0" Hyatt played at 164 pounds as a sophomore and said he was not confident in his weight. He has put on 20 pounds and wants to add another six to reach 190. The South Carolina native has been eating six meals a day to bulk up. "This offseason, I've never worked as hard, (and) I'm just trying to keep building on that," Hyatt said.

RISING STAR

CHRISTIAN CHARLES, a former high school quarterback, pulled double duty at safety and cornerback in spring football. He could contribute at either. "Christian Charles is a guy inside of our program that we continue to feel better and better about," Josh Heupel says.

2022 TENNESSEE ROSTER

	QUARTERBACKS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
5	Hooker, Hendon	6-4/218	Sr.	Greensboro, NC
10	Jackson, Tayven	6-3/200	Fr.	Greenwood, IN
7	Milton III, Joe	6-5/245	Sr.	Pahokee, FL
13	Moore, Gaston	6-2/207	So.	Hilton Head, SC
21	Shuler, Navy	6-0/206	So.	Fletcher, NC

	RUNNING BACKS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
2	Small, Jabari	5-11/213	Jr.	Memphis, TN
27	Whitehead, Len'Neth	6-2/220	So.	Athens, GA
35	Wilk, Patrick	5-11/200	Fr.	Nashville, TN
26	Williams-Thomas, Justin	6-0/210	Fr.	Dallas, GA
20	Wright, Jaylen	5-11/200	So.	Durham, NC

	RECEIVERS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
17	Bittner, Michael	6-2/223	Jr.	Cincinnati, OH
46	Brunetti, Lucien	6-0/165	Fr.	Nashville, TN
9	Calloway, Jimmy	6-0/190	So.	Morrow, GA
0	Frerking, Grant	6-5/224	Sr.	Atlanta, GA
6	Holiday, Jimmy	6-0/205	Jr.	Flora, MS
11	Hyatt, Jalin	6-0/184	Jr.	Irmo, SC
22	Jancek, Jack	6-5/210	So.	Knoxville, TN
80	Keyton, Ramel	6-3/195	Sr.	Marietta, GA
28	Lanier, Nigel	6-0/190	Fr.	Huntsville, AL
19	Merrill, Walker	6-1/195	So.	Brentwood, TN
82	Miller, Cameron	6-1/206	Fr.	Memphis, TN
81	Nimrod, Chas	6-3/192	Fr.	Bentonville, AR
4	Tillman, Cedric	6-3/215	Sr.	Las Vegas, NV
84	Webb, Kaleb	6-3/196	Fr.	Powder Springs, GA
83	White, Marquarius	5-10/160	Fr.	Birmingham, AL

	TIGHT ENDS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
44	Browder, Charlie	6-7/250	Fr.	Kingsport, TN
86	Campbell, Miles	6-3/235	Fr.	Douglasville, GA
88	Fant, Princeton	6-2/235	Sr.	Nashville, TN
43	Rohrer, Titus	6-7/230	Fr.	Bryan, OH
89	Salmon, Hunter	6-5/245	Jr.	Birmingham, AL
87	Warren, Jacob	6-6/250	Sr.	Knoxville, TN

	OFFENSIVE LINEMEN	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
65	Ball, Parker	6-4/290	Jr.	Douglasville, GA
75	Carvin, Jerome	6-5/321	Sr.	Memphis, TN
56	Clipper Jr., Mo	6-5/305	Fr.	Alpharetta, GA
53	Crawford, Jeremiah	6-5/315	Sr.	Goddard, KS
66	Davis, Dayne	6-7/325	Jr.	Bluff City, TN
73	Grant, Brian	6-7/290	Fr.	Fort Walton Beach, FL
54	Harris, Kingston	6-3/340	Sr.	Orlando, FL
55	Krivosh, Braeden	6-2/310	So.	Baltimore, MD
50	Lampley, Jackson	6-4/320	Jr.	Nashville, TN
78	Lane, Ollie	6-4/325	Sr.	Corryton, TN
63	Mays, Cooper	6-3/296	Jr.	Knoxville, TN
51	Mincey, Gerald	6-6/337	So.	Fort Lauderdale, FL
72	Nichols, Addison	6-5/318	Fr.	Atlanta, GA
64	Parker, William	6-5/310	Fr.	Nashville, TN
70	Perry, RJ	6-6/325	So.	Fairfield, AL
76	Spraggins, Javontez	6-3/325	Jr.	East St. Louis, IL
58	Wright, Darnell	6-6/345	Sr.	Huntington, WV

	DEFENSIVE LINEMEN	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
79	Adams, Jaxon	6-3/252	Fr.	Oak Ridge, TN
59	Bailey, Dominic	6-3/270	So.	Salisbury, MD
9	Baron, Tyler	6-5/260	Jr.	Knoxville, TN
11	Bumphus, LaTrell	6-3/290	Sr.	Savannah, TN
20	Eason, Bryson	6-3/300	So.	Memphis, TN
99	Garland, Kurott	6-3/310	Sr.	Conyers, GA
58	Green, Isaac	6-0/300	Jr.	Memphis, TN
30	Harrison, Roman	6-2/244	Sr.	Bainbridge, GA
93	McNeill, Amari	6-4/285	Fr.	Suwanee, GA
50	Phillips, Jordan	6-2/295	Fr.	Orlando, FL
51	Simmons, Elijah	6-2/340	Jr.	Memphis, TN
52	Smith, Maurese	6-3/315	Sr.	Huntsville, AL
57	Stum, Luke	6-2/240	Fr.	Chattanooga, TN
95	Terry, Da'Jon	6-4/321	Jr.	Meridian, MS
21	Thomas, Omari	6-4/320	Jr.	Memphis, TN
54	West, Tyre	6-3/290	Fr.	Tifton, GA
6	Young, Byron	6-3/245	Sr.	Georgetown, SC

	LINEBACKERS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
33	Banks, Jeremy	6-1/224	Sr.	Cordova, TN
24	Beasley, Aaron	6-1/225	Sr.	Franklin, GA
47	Gaca, Matt	6-2/223	Jr.	Franklin, TN
15	Garland, Kwauze	6-1/225	Jr.	Conyers, GA
53	Hannah, Jackson	6-3/225	Jr.	Nashville, TN
44	Herring, Elijah	6-2/227	Fr.	Newnan, GA
31	Humphrey, Nick	6-1/216	Sr.	Monroe, MI
10	Mitchell, Juwan	6-1/235	Sr.	Newark, NJ
18	Mohan, William	6-1/210	So.	Brooklyn, NY
38	Page III, Solon	6-2/228	Sr.	Atlanta, GA
39	Shuler, West	6-1/220	Jr.	Knoxville, TN
55	Valentine, Eunique	6-3/205	So.	Knoxville, TN
46	Young, Noah	6-1/229	Sr.	Gulf Breeze, FL

	DEFENSIVE BACKS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
37	Bandy, Montrell	6-3/185	Fr.	Mount Juliet, TN
35	Brooks, Will	6-1/200	So.	Birmingham, AL
4	Burrell, Warren	6-0/190	Sr.	Suwanee, GA
14	Charles, Christian	6-1/186	So.	Gainesville, GA
7	Edwards, Romello	6-0/187	Sr.	Philadelphia, PA
1	Flowers, Trevon	5-11/200	Sr.	Atlanta, GA
43	Gentry, Jerrod	6-0/200	Fr.	Memphis, TN
13	Hadden, Kamal	6-1/190	Jr.	River Rouge, MI
23	Labruzza, Cheyenne	5-11/200	Sr.	Albany, LA
22	McCollough, Jaylen	6-0/205	Sr.	Austell, GA
12	McDonald, Tamarion	6-2/200	Jr.	Memphis, TN
34	Riley, Trel	6-1/180	So.	Princeton, KY
28	Rucker, De'Shawn	6-0/190	So.	Tallahassee, FL
0	Slaughter, Doneiko	6-0/190	Jr.	Roswell, GA
29	Turnage, Brandon	6-1/186	Jr.	Oxford, MS
	Turrentine, Andre	5-11/195	Fr.	Nashville, TN
25	Williams, Desmond	5-11/190	Jr.	Forsyth, GA
36	Wright, William	6-0/190	So.	Nashville, TN

	SPECIALISTS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
37	Brooks, Paxton (P/K)	6-6/201	Sr.	Lexington, SC
41	Carver, JT (K)	5-11/195	Fr.	Martin, TN
40	McGrath, Chase (K)	6-0/198	Sr.	Newport Beach, CA
93	Morgan, Kolby (P)	5-11/200	Fr.	Oneida, TN
47	Salansky, Matthew (LS)	5-11/245	Jr.	Morristown, TN
60	Stephens, Alton (LS)	5-11/190	Jr.	Cordele, GA
39	Wilson, Toby (K)	5-10/190	Sr.	Brentwood, TN

2022 **SIGNEES**

Tennessee head coach Josh Heupel answered a lot of questions with his first season in Knoxville. He also answered a nagging question — among Vols fans, anyway — with his 2022 recruiting class.

Tennessee snagged three four-star prospects — and three of their top five commitments — on Early Signing Day as Heupel put to rest any concerns about his ability to recruit.

"The product is starting to sell itself," Heupel said in October. "I say that meaning (recruits) understand what they are going to be playing in. There is a ton of excitement from recruits. It is a completely different feel when you have something that you are able to show them that they can see."

The Vols signed a top-20 class while loading up on dynamic playmakers offensively and recruiting well in the trenches.

Wide receivers Chas Nimrod and Marquarius "Squirrel" White are standout talents who impressed during spring football. Cameron Miller and Kaleb Webb round out a deep class at wide receiver with Webb being the most highly regarded wide receiver in the class. Justin Williams-Thomas, a four-star running back, committed on Signing Day as the Vols won a notable recruiting battle for the Georgia talent.

Addison Nichols, a four-star, led the group of offensive linemen. UT signed five defensive linemen and edge rushers. Four-stars James Pearce and Tyre West highlighted the bunch. Joshua Josephs has a lot of upside as an edge rusher.

Quarterback Tayven Jackson was perhaps the most important signee. The Indiana product committed in April 2021, an early sign that Heupel's hire at Tennessee would resonate on the recruiting trail.

Tennessee needed linebacker depth in the class but only signed two. Elijah Herring, a Georgia native who finished his prep career in Murfreesboro, Tenn., has a lot of upside. Plus, Nebraska transfer Jackson Hannah brings college experience to the group.

The Vols also signed only three defensive backs to join an upperclassman-heavy group. Junior college cornerback Dee Williams will have an early opportunity to play in the secondary.

BY POSITION

Defensive Linemen	5
Wide Receivers	4
Offensive Linemen	4
Defensive Backs	3
Running Backs	2
Linebackers	2
Quarterbacks	1

BY STATE

Georgia	9
Alabama	2
Florida	2
Arkansas	1
Indiana	1
Kentucky	1
Louisiana	1
Michigan	1
New Jersey	1
North Carolina	1
Tennessee	1

RECRUIT SPOTLIGHT

MARQUARIUS WHITE

WR • Birmingham, AL

Marquarius White, a three-star receiver prospect out of Birmingham (Ala.) Clay-Chalkville, is noticeable for his both his speed and playmaking abilities on the field. But the freshman wide receiver is also memorable for his nickname.

White received the nickname "Squirrel" as a child and is commonly referred to that way by his teammates and coaches.

The 5'10", 160-pound White enrolled early in January. He quickly turned heads, as "Squirrel" was a common name dropped throughout spring practices.

"Squirrel can freakin' run," Vols wide receivers coach Kelsey Pope said after the Vols' first spring practice. "He doesn't bat an eye when things get chaotic. He is flying around. If someone's trying to be physical, he'll match that intensity and physicality. He's got the biggest heart. He's the smallest stature, but got the biggest heart in the room, probably."

Tennessee landed White as one of four wide receivers in its 2022 class. He picked Tennessee from among more than 20 offers, and the Vols held off pushes from Auburn and Georgia, both of which hosted White on official visits leading up to the early signing period.

"I love watching him because, for his age and for how young he is, he's super (heady) just about situational football," senior tight end Jacob Warren says. "Whether it's understanding he's got to get down when we're in a four-minute situation, understanding he has to push his route that's maybe supposed to be 10 yards, but he needs to really push it to 12 to get the first down."

Name	Pos	Ht/Wt	Hometown	247	ESPN	Rivals	Nat. Rank
Mo Clipper Jr.	OL	6-5/305	Alpharetta, GA	★★★	★★★★	★★★	741
Brian Grant	OT	6-7/279	Fort Walton Beach, FL	★★★	★★★	★★★	878
Christian Harrison	CB	6-0/183	Atlanta, GA	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,146
Elijah Herring	LB	6-2/227	Newnan, GA	★★★	★★★	★★★	704
Tayven Jackson	QB	6-3/200	Greenwood, IN	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	205
Jayson Jenkins	DL	6-6/260	Bordertown, NJ	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,214
Joshua Josephs	EDGE	6-3/215	Kennesaw, GA	★★★★	★★★	★★★	339
Cameron Miller	WR	6-1/206	Memphis, TN	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	428
Addison Nichols	OL	6-5/318	Atlanta, GA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	142
Chas Nimrod	WR	6-3/192	Bentonville, AR	★★★	★★★	★★★	563
James Pearce	EDGE	6-5/220	Charlotte, NC	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	211
Kalib Perry	LB	6-4/215	Georgetown, KY	★★★	★★★	★★★	832
Jordan Phillips	DL	6-2/295	Orlando, FL	★★★	★★★	★★★	646
Masai Reddick	OT	6-5/328	Detroit, MI	★★★	★★★	★★★	851
Dylan Sampson	RB	5-11/185	Baton Rouge, LA	★★★	★★★	★★★	444
Jourdan Thomas	S	6-2/187	Montgomery, AL	★★★	★★★	★★★	858
Kaleb Webb	WR	6-3/196	Powder Springs, GA	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	318
Tyre West	DL	6-3/290	Tifton, GA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	162
Marquarius White	WR	5-10/160	Birmingham, AL	★★★	★★★	★★★	550
Dee Williams	CB	5-11/190	Forsyth, GA	★★★	★★★	★★★	7*
Justin Williams-Thomas	RB	6-0/210	Dallas, GA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	283

*junior college transfer

VANDERBILT COMMODORES

National Forecast: 94 • SEC East Prediction: 7 • Projected Record: 3-9, 0-8 SEC

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Clark Lea
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 2-10 (1 year)
CAREER RECORD: 2-10 (1 year)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Joey Lynch
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Nick Howell
LOCATION: Nashville, TN
STADIUM: Vanderbilt Stadium (40,350)

KEY COMMODORES

ANFERNEE ORJI, LB Led the Commodores in tackles (92) and tackles for a loss (13) as their most disruptive defensive player.

RE'MAHN DAVIS, RB The clear backfield starter if healthy, Davis ran for 211 yards before suffering an injury during Vanderbilt's third game of the season.

WILL SHEPPARD, WR Second on the team in receptions (43) and yards (577) while scoring four touchdowns as a sophomore.

KEY LOSSES

CAM JOHNSON, WR Johnson was a three-year starter at slot receiver who served as a reliable target over the middle of the field and also returned punts.

TYLER STEEN, LT Steen struggled at Vanderbilt but was a three-year starter who transferred to Alabama.

RAASHAAN WILKINS, DT Vanderbilt lacks beef on the defensive line after losing Wilkins, a run-stuffing specialist.

THE VERDICT

The Commodores struggled mightily with eight losses by 14 or more points in head coach Clark Lea's debut season. Also, the program failed to win a SEC game for the second year in a row and has just five overall victories since 2019. However, the news wasn't all bad for the new staff, as Vanderbilt showed some improvement late in the season, and a standout recruiting class that ranked No. 32 nationally provides the program with some hope for the future. The non-conference slate offers a few opportunities for wins, but finding a victory in SEC play could be a challenge unless there's marked improvement on defense after the Dores allowed 39.6 points per game in conference matchups last year.

BETTORS' BOX

VANDERBILT FUTURES

ODDS TO WIN NATIONAL TITLE: 5,000/1
ODDS TO WIN SEC: 1,500/1
ODDS TO WIN SEC EAST: 500/1
SEASON WIN O/U: 2.5 (Under -130)
HEISMAN CONTENDERS: None
BETTORS' BYTE: Vanderbilt is a woeful 5-15 ATS as a home underdog the last 20 instances, failing to cover those games by more than eight PPG on average.

Information provided by the Bet the Board staff

Clark Lea knew he faced a rebuilding job upon returning to Vanderbilt as head coach ahead of the 2021 season, but things went even worse for the Commodores than perhaps he expected. A blowout loss to FCS foe East Tennessee State in Lea's first game augured a difficult campaign, and Vanderbilt displayed how far it must go to compete in the SEC en route to a 2–10 record.

Heading into Lea's second campaign, however, Vanderbilt got the luxury of having increased personnel flexibility after a full roster left the new coaching staff in a bind last year. Lea and Co. will hope that a year of continuity, further development from the Commodores' young players and roster turnover can push Vanderbilt a bit closer to a .500 record.

OFFENSE Lea and his staff never got settled on offense last year, and that problem dated all the way back to spring practice. One week into fall camp, Lea finally decided to pull the plug on offensive coordinator David Raih and made quarterbacks coach Joey Lynch the new play-caller. Lynch returns as the play-caller this season with the formal offensive coordinator title as well after Raih's departure.

Regardless of who called the shots last season, Vanderbilt could not settle on one starting quarterback. The battle remains open between juniors Ken Seals and Mike Wright, and that competition will stretch well into fall camp if not the regular season. Seals battled injuries and the yips behind a leaky offensive line, while the offense generally functioned better with the speedy but inaccurate Wright taking snaps.

The SEC's worst offensive line took a hit when starting left tackle Tyler Steen entered the NCAA transfer portal and landed at Alabama, meaning the front five should be a big weakness again. If Vanderbilt can block for its quarterbacks, however, Seals and Wright could have a decent group of players around them at the skill positions. The Dores ran for just 3.5 yards per carry last season largely due to the lack of available holes to hit.

Tight end Ben Bresnahan is a three-year starter, while wide receiver Will Sheppard broke out last season as a sophomore with 43 receptions for 577 yards and four touchdowns. Starting running back Re'Mahn Davis looked like the Commodores' best player early last fall before a toe injury ended his season after three games, and Vanderbilt owns strong depth behind him with experienced options like Patrick Smith and Rocko Griffin. Those backs, however, could benefit from more of a downfield passing game to keep defenses honest — Vanderbilt's 34 plays of 20-plus yards ranked 126th of 130 FBS teams.

DEFENSE Although it remains unclear whether Vanderbilt can field a better offense in 2022, the defense should take a step forward. Former UConn cornerback Jeremy Lucien and former Clemson linebacker Kane Patterson are both expected to start, and senior linebacker Anfernee Orji could emerge as an NFL Draft prospect.

Multiple freshmen should play early. Still, Vanderbilt

ANFERNEE ORJI

Tom DiPace

2022 SCHEDULE

Aug. 27	at Hawaii
Sept. 3	Elon
Sept. 10	Wake Forest
Sept. 17	at Northern Illinois
Sept. 24	at Alabama
Oct. 8	Ole Miss
Oct. 15	at Georgia
Oct. 22	at Missouri
Nov. 5	South Carolina
Nov. 12	at Kentucky
Nov. 19	Florida
Nov. 26	Tennessee

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 2-10, 0-8 SEC

Sept. 4	East Tennessee St.	L	3-23
Sept. 11	at Colorado State	W	24-21
Sept. 18	Stanford	L	23-41
Sept. 25	Georgia	L	0-62
Oct. 2	Connecticut	W	30-28
Oct. 9	at Florida	L	0-42
Oct. 16	at South Carolina	L	20-21
Oct. 23	Mississippi State	L	6-45
Oct. 30	Missouri	L	28-37
Nov. 13	Kentucky	L	17-34
Nov. 20	at Ole Miss	L	17-31
Nov. 27	at Tennessee	L	21-45

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	15.8 ppg	14	128
Rushing	123.2 ypg	12	103
Passing	189.3 ypg	14	104
Total	312.6 ypg	14	118

DEFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	35.6 ppg	14	119
Rushing	193.4 ypg	13	107
Passing	264.2 ypg	13	114
Total	457.7 ypg	14	118

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
-3	-0.25	12	87

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	24.2	129
Defense	33.2	127
Margin	-9.0	130

Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	34.5%	127
Defense	46.8%	111
Margin	-12.3%	124

Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	4.5	124
Defense	6.9	120
Margin	-2.4	128

Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	3.6	109
Defense	4.6	110
Margin	-1.0	116

Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	-0.3	77
Actual	-3	82
Margin	-2.7	95

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

-9.75

Vanderbilt's offense ran plays, on average, while facing a deficit of 9.75 points, ranking 128th in the country. The Commodores' two 2021 wins came by five total points.

32.7%

Vanderbilt ranked 127th in offensive success rate in 2021 at 32.7 percent. The Commodores completed 55.3 percent of their passes on the season.

35.7%

Vanderbilt's defense had decent success in getting off the field on third down. The Commodores held opponents to a 35.7 percent third-down conversion percentage, seventh in the SEC.

did not address its No. 1 weakness: the pass rush. The Dores tallied nine sacks last season, by far the fewest in the SEC. That put tremendous pressure on a so-so group of defensive backs, as opposing quarterbacks got all day to read coverages and make throws.

Redshirt senior defensive end Elijah McAllister will play as a traditional lineman this season rather than an outside linebacker and must take a step forward after a disappointing post-torn ACL season in 2021. True freshman Darren Agu could contribute as a pass rusher. Lea will take a bigger role in coaching the defense, so he and defensive coordinator Nick Howell will need to find creative ways to apply pressure.

Depending on the alignment, the Dores could start as many as 10 defenders who started at Vanderbilt or elsewhere last season. That alone should result in at least some progress.

SPECIALISTS Vanderbilt's biggest strength? Its specialists should be up to SEC standards. Starting kicker Joseph Bulovas converted 14-of-19 field goals after transferring from Alabama and made two game-winning boots. Florida Atlantic transfer Matt Hayball ranked second in Conference USA with a punting average of 45.7 yards per kick.

The Commodores' return game could go from awful to respectable thanks to freshman wideout Jayden McGowan, who brings sub-4.4 speed. Coverage could improve as well thanks to an infusion of speed and athleticism from the 2022 class with potential contributors like linebackers Daniel Martin and BJ Diakite as well as defensive backs Trudell Berry, Ja'Dais Richard and Jameson Wharton. Vanderbilt ranked 12th or worse in the SEC in kick and punt return average both for and against.

FINAL ANALYSIS Work remains for Lea and his staff as they look to build an SEC-caliber roster, and games against Alabama and Georgia should expose the Commodores once again. Lea will hope that the talented young players and transfers he brought in can at least show flashes of promise while perhaps leading Vanderbilt to two or three wins out of conference.

Lea has indicated that players are more comfortable in Year 2 after the coaching change and that they have bought in. That locker-room harmony does not hurt, but it also will not suddenly result in six wins. If Vanderbilt shows on-field improvement, it will most likely be modest rather than a full-on turnaround.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

WR	**14**	**Will Sheppard (Jr.)**	18	Logan Kyle (Jr.)
WR	81	Jayden McGowan (Fr.)	6	Devin Boddie Jr. (Sr.)
WR	3	Quincy Skinner Jr. (So.)		Daveon Walker (Fr.)
LT		Jacob Brammer (Sr.)	70	David Siegel (Fr.)
LG	71	Gage Pitchford (So.)	55	Gunnar Hansen (So.)
C	**62**	**Julian Hernandez (Sr.)**	56	Jake Ketschek (So.)
RG	63	Delfin Xavier Castillo (So.)	**75**	**Ben Cox (Jr.)**
RT	**50**	**Bradley Ashmore (Jr.)**	77	Junior Uzebu (Sr.)
TE	**86**	**Ben Bresnahan (Sr.)**	10	Gavin Schoenwald (Sr.)
QB	5	Mike Wright (Jr.)	**8**	**Ken Seals (Jr.)**
RB	**2**	**Re'Mahn Davis (Sr.)**	4	Patrick Smith (So.)

DEFENSE (6)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	1	Elijah McAllister (Sr.)	**90**	**Nate Clifton (Jr.)**
NT	35	Malik Langham (Sr.)	99	Devin Lee (So.)
DT	**9**	**Daevion Davis (Sr.)**		Myles Cecil (Sr.)
OLB	33	De'Rickey Wright (Jr.)	13	CJ Taylor (So.)
ILB	**0**	**Anfernee Orji (Sr.)**	12	Errington Truesdell (So.)
ILB	19	Kane Patterson (Sr.)	**32**	**Ethan Barr (Jr.)**
CB		Jeremy Lucien (Sr.)		Trudell Berry (Fr.)
CB	**23**	**Jaylen Mahoney (Sr.)**	8	Tyson Russell (So.)
STAR	88	Michael Owusu (Sr.)		Darren Agu (Fr.)
SS	**21**	**Maxwell Worship (Sr.)**		Ja'Dais Richard (Fr.)
FS	15	Chase Lloyd (Jr.)	7	Marlen Sewell (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	36	Joseph Bulovas (Sr.)	**KR**	16	Jayden McGowan (Fr.)
P		Matt Hayball (Sr.)	**PR**	16	Jayden McGowan (Fr.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	**ATT**	**COMP**	**YDS**	**TD**	**INT**
Ken Seals	**224**	**127**	**1,181**	**5**	**8**
Mike Wright	**175**	**93**	**1,042**	**8**	**6**
Cam Johnson	1	1	25	0	0
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Rocko Griffin	**145**	**517**	**3.6**	**4**	
Mike Wright	**91**	**373**	**4.1**	**1**	
Patrick Smith	**82**	**360**	**4.4**	**1**	
Re'Mahn Davis	**44**	**211**	**4.8**	**1**	
James Ziglor III	**13**	**41**	**3.2**	**0**	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Chris Pierce Jr.	57	654	11.5	2	
Will Sheppard	**43**	**577**	**13.4**	**4**	
Cam Johnson	34	327	9.6	4	
Devin Boddie Jr.	**29**	**263**	**9.1**	**1**	
Patrick Smith	**16**	**84**	**5.3**	**0**	

KICKING: **Joseph Bulovas, 14-19 FGs, 57 pts.**
TACKLES: **Anfernee Orji, 92; Ethan Barr, 85**
SACKS: Brayden DeVault-Smith, 2.0; **Jaylen Mahoney, 2.0**
INTERCEPTIONS: **Ethan Barr, 3;** Dashaun Jerkins, 3

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE COMMODORES

Opposing Coaches Size Up Vanderbilt

"You'll probably see more improvement on defense this season; the offense still has way more questions and personnel issues. There's some talent on defense, namely some of the upperclassmen in the secondary. … Offensively, they need an identity. They need to plant a flag on something. They don't have a true starting quarterback right now. They're returning the two guys, but I don't know if either is a long-term solution. And they don't have a true playmaker type at any skill position where they could build around them. They're pretty bad up front and lost some guys to transfer they could've built the line around. They've got some great young coaches on that staff, but they're fighting the future with one hand tied behind their back, and not just in the SEC. Right now, I think you'd be hard-pressed to find a program that's more exposed by NIL and by the portal than this one. It wasn't easy to coach here before; now it could be a lot harder. We haven't seen how they can use either of those to their advantage, but you can definitely see a future where players come in, get coached up and developed and transfer out. Look at Tyler Steen. He was starting there, and now he's at Bama. And the bigger problem is, you can't just take a kid from the MAC in the portal, either, because of the academics. … The good news is that there's no urgency to fix things quickly. They've got time to figure it out."

OUTSIDE THE HUDDLE

STAFF RESET Half of Clark Lea's assistant coaches, including four of five on defense, departed in the offseason. Defensive coordinator Jesse Minter accepted the same position at Michigan; cornerbacks coach LaMar Morgan became the DC at Louisiana; and defensive tackles coach Inoke Breckterfield headed out West to Washington. Meanwhile, linebackers coach John Egorugwu returned to the NFL with the New York Giants, and former offensive coordinator David Raih left an awkward situation after his demotion.

SECOND CHANCE Junior linebacker De'Rickey Wright is a likely starter who entered the NCAA transfer portal in February after missing time last season for disciplinary reasons. But Wright withdrew his name from the portal in April and is expected to return to the roster barring further issues. Wright's 3.5 tackles for a loss last season in only eight games ranked fourth on the team.

FROM ONE LINE TO ANOTHER Lacking depth and experience on the defensive line, Vanderbilt converted a pair of offensive linemen this offseason. Former offensive tackle Brayden Bapst could contribute as a 4-3 defensive end, while former center Kevo Wesley adds a big body at defensive tackle. Neither will start, but both could get backup snaps.

DAEVION DAVIS

Tom DiPace

YOUTH MOVEMENT As many as six freshmen could realistically push for starting jobs, perhaps an indictment on the talent level former head coach Derek Mason left behind as much as a positive indicator about Lea's incoming class. That includes David Siegel, a rare offensive tackle who could start in his first year on campus.

BROTHERS REUNITED Kane Patterson could have competed for a starting spot at Clemson this season but instead transferred to join his younger brother, Langston Patterson, an incoming freshman linebacker. The elder Patterson said a chance to share the locker room with family was too compelling to pass up, even with the Tigers expected to contend in the ACC. "I guess the conversation has been since we were younger, just talking about it," Kane Patterson says. "But I was always supportive of him and where he wanted to go during his process. … For him, he loved Vanderbilt and he came here. And I wanted to come play with him here."

ON THE MEND Senior defensive tackle Daevion Davis tore his ACL late last season and is expected to return to full participation around the time of Vanderbilt's opener at Hawaii on Aug. 27. In the meantime, Vanderbilt will lean on Cal Poly transfer Myles Cecil as a like-for-like replacement who can cause offensive linemen issues with his speed and quickness.

ROAD WARRIORS Vanderbilt will play two road games against Group of Five foes: at Hawaii for the opener and at Northern Illinois on Sept. 17. Combine those trips with a home game against Wake Forest and a loaded SEC slate, and the schedule does not set up well for a bounce-back campaign.

RISING STAR

Although **QUINCY SKINNER JR.** did not make a single catch in eight games as a true freshman in 2021, he put himself in strong position to start at one outside receiver spot with a strong performance during spring ball. Skinner is a well-rounded player with no clear weaknesses.

2022 VANDERBILT ROSTER

	QUARTERBACKS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
8	Seals, Ken	6-3/220	Jr.	Azle, TX
13	Swann, AJ	6-3/215	Fr.	White, GA
5	Wright, Mike	6-4/190	Jr.	Fayetteville, GA
	RUNNING BACKS	**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
45	Betts-Pauley, Dylan	5-11/240	So.	Hoover, AL
2	Davis, Re'Mahn	5-9/205	Sr.	San Francisco, CA
37	Edwards, Maurice	6-0/195	Fr.	Gurnee, IL
24	Griffin, Rocko	5-9/203	Jr.	Rincon, GA
4	Smith, Patrick	5-10/180	So.	Egg Harbor Township, NJ
16	Ziglor III, James	5-11/190	So.	Marietta, GA
	RECEIVERS	**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
6	Boddie Jr., Devin	5-11/180	Sr.	Memphis, TN
18	Kyle, Logan	6-3/209	So.	Cypress, TX
80	Long, Wilson	6-0/197	Jr.	Austin, TX
1	McAllister, Ezra	6-0/183	So.	Marshall, MI
81	McGowan, Jayden	5-8/177	Fr.	Laurens, SC
14	Sheppard, Will	6-3/200	Jr.	Mandeville, LA
3	Skinner Jr., Quincy	6-1/200	So.	Pompano Beach, FL
	TIGHT ENDS	**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
84	Ball, Justin	6-6/245	Sr.	Glenn Dale, MD
86	Bresnahan, Ben	6-4/243	Sr.	Cumming, GA
85	DeCoursey, Joel	6-4/235	Sr.	Zionsville, IN
10	Schoenwald, Gavin	6-4/243	Sr.	Brentwood, TN
	OFFENSIVE LINEMEN	**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
50	Ashmore, Bradley	6-6/290	Jr.	Neptune Beach, FL
	Brammer, Jacob	6-4/301	Sr.	Richmond, TX
64	Castillo, Delfin Xavier	6-5/330	So.	Kissimmee, FL
73	Clark, Charlie	6-7/284	So.	Madison, WI
75	Cox, Ben	6-5/310	Jr.	Radford, VA
55	Hansen, Gunnar	6-5/317	So.	Boca Raton, FL
62	Hernandez, Julian	6-4/304	Sr.	Davie, FL
56	Ketschek, Jake	6-4/305	So.	Absecon, NJ
71	Pitchford, Gage	6-6/300	So.	Newnan, GA
70	Siegel, David	6-6/297	Fr.	New Canaan, CT
77	Uzebu, Junior	6-6/326	Sr.	Atlanta, GA
52	Weaver, Trent	6-3/299	Jr.	St. Louis, MO
	DEFENSIVE LINEMEN	**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
96	Bapst, Brayden	6-8/280	Sr.	Washington, DC
57	Bence, Tyler	6-3/255	So.	Huntsville, AL
17	Brown, Alex	6-2/242	Sr.	San Antonio, TX
29	Capers, Miles	6-5/230	So.	Sumter, SC
	Cecil, Myles	6-3/285	Sr.	Panorama City, CA
90	Clifton, Nate	6-5/280	Sr.	La Vergne, TN
9	Davis, Daevion	6-2/285	Sr.	Madison, AL
91	James, Christian	6-4/275	Sr.	Memphis, TN
35	Langham, Malik	6-5/296	Sr.	Huntsville, AL
99	Lee, Devin	6-3/277	So.	McDonough, GA
1	McAllister, Elijah	6-6/261	Sr.	Rumson, NJ
88	Owusu, Michael	6-5/231	Sr.	Oxnard, CA
31	Spencer, Michael	6-4/260	Jr.	Union, KY
93	Wesley, Kevo	6-4/290	Jr.	Chicago, IL
	LINEBACKERS	**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
32	Barr, Ethan	6-3/244	Jr.	Flower Mound, TX
40	Eckels, Tommy	6-2/225	Jr.	Kansas City, MO
51	Gaw, Daniel	6-3/230	So.	Nashville, TN
49	Martin, Daniel	6-3/200	Fr.	Marietta, GA
0	Orji, Anfernee	6-2/230	Sr.	Rockwall, TX
19	Patterson, Kane	6-1/230	Sr.	Nashville, TN
13	Taylor, CJ	6-1/206	So.	McMinnville, TN
12	Truesdell, Errington	6-1/224	So.	Duluth, GA
33	Wright, De'Rickey	6-4/230	Jr.	Gadsden, AL
	DEFENSIVE BACKS	**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
26	Anderson, BJ	6-1/195	Sr.	Andalusia, AL
20	Barton, Jack	6-1/215	Jr.	Dallas, TX
42	Coleman, Camden	6-1/215	Sr.	Champaign, IL
27	Gaskins, Quantaves	6-1/190	Fr.	Atlanta, GA
11	Harris, Justin	6-1/195	Sr.	Attalla, AL
22	Howse IV, John	6-2/190	So.	Nashville, TN
	Lucien, Jeremy	6-2/192	Sr.	Moore Township, PA
15	Lloyd, Chase	6-2/203	Jr.	Atlanta, GA
23	Mahoney, Jaylen	5-11/191	Sr.	Rock Hill, SC
25	McCord, Ryan	6-1/190	Jr.	Dallas, TX
8	Russell, Tyson	5-11/180	So.	Plantation, FL
28	Sannieniola, Steven	6-2/190	Fr.	Bowie, MD
7	Sewell, Marlen	6-1/185	So.	Birmingham, AL
13	Taylor, CJ	6-1/206	So.	McMinnville, TN
21	Worship, Maxwell	6-1/210	Sr.	Coral Springs, FL
44	Wright, Alan	6-0/181	So.	Fayetteville, GA
	SPECIALISTS	**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
36	Bulovas, Joseph (K)	6-0/210	Sr.	Mandeville, LA
58	Elstein, Jared (K/P)	6-2/185	Sr.	Miami, FL
38	Faris, Will (K)	5-11/166	So.	Dallas, TX
	Hayball, Matt (P)	6-1/188	Sr.	West Adelaide, Aus.
47	Schelling, Wesley (LS)	6-5/235	Jr.	Nashville, TN
30	Wheatley, Jared (P)	6-1/205	Sr.	Indian Trail, NC

2022 SIGNEES

Clark Lea and general manager Barton Simmons recruit more for athletic traits rather than football polish, and that showed up in a 2022 class full of length, speed and other projectable traits. The result? Vanderbilt's second-highest-rated class of the last 10 years at No. 32 nationally.

Four-star linebacker Daniel Martin, four-star safety Ja'Dais Richard and three-star quarterback AJ Swann headline the class, which should have an immediate impact on special teams. In a departure from typical recruiting strategy, the Commodores took two more QBs in addition to Swann — Drew Dickey and Walter Taylor.

Swann flipped to Vanderbilt from Maryland and owns a rocket arm of the type that the Commodores have rarely seen on their roster. Although the Georgia native could push Ken Seals and Mike Wright, he more likely slots in as the third quarterback as he continues to develop.

High school track stars Trudell Berry, Richard, Jeffrey Ugochukwu and Jameson Wharton could all play right away for a speed-starved secondary, especially Berry and Richard. Wide receiver Daveon Walker did not rake in many Power 5 offers but should factor in and could even start.

Although Vanderbilt's offensive line needs work, the Dores may have to wait for freshmen David Siegel, Grayson Morgan and Levi Harber to add weight before they push for snaps. Siegel, a tackle, has the best chance to play early after he took a postgrad season — he is one year older than most college freshmen.

In an attempt to find top athletes with size, Vanderbilt turned to Europe. Defensive line signees Darren Agu (U.K.), Linus Zunk (Germany) and Yilanan Ouattarra (Germany) are all 6'6" or bigger but will likely need time to develop further.

BY POSITION

Defensive Backs	5
Offensive Linemen	4
Defensive Linemen	4
Quarterbacks	3
Wide Receivers	3
Linebackers	3
Athletes	3
Running Backs	2
Tight Ends	1

BY STATE

Georgia	6
Florida	4
Tennessee	4
Texas	3
Alabama	2
Germany	2
Connecticut	1
Illinois	1
Louisiana	1
Maryland	1
Michigan	1
South Carolina	1
England	1

RECRUIT SPOTLIGHT

JAYDEN MCGOWAN

WR • Laurens, SC

When Jayden McGowan traveled to Nashville for an unofficial visit to Vanderbilt in late July 2021, he held zero offers from Power 5 programs and appeared headed to FCS Harvard. A private workout that the Commodores told him was among the most impressive they saw during the entire 2022 cycle changed McGowan's recruitment and perhaps the trajectory of Vanderbilt's offense as well.

McGowan completed drills at running back and wide receiver, fielded punts and went through athletic testing. He committed in late August, following in the footsteps of his cousin Thomas Jones — a former Vanderbilt baseball recruit who signed with the Miami Marlins as a third-round pick in the 2016 MLB Draft instead of heading to college.

Vanderbilt signed McGowan in December 2021 without any other competition from Power 5 schools, and he enrolled in January. Although the 5'8", 177-pounder is tiny by SEC standards, he emerged as one of Vanderbilt's best offensive players during spring ball. A team that lacked any semblance of team speed last year now has an all-purpose threat to use on misdirection plays, screens and jet sweeps to stretch defenses and take pressure off a questionable offensive line. And a return game that featured no bite now could set up the offense with better field position.

Name	Pos	Ht/Wt	Hometown	247	ESPN	Rivals	Nat. Rank
Darren Agu	EDGE	6-6/225	London, Eng.	★★★	★★★	★★★	505
Trudell Berry	ATH	6-0/180	Baytown, TX	★★★	★★★	★★★	570
Bryce Cowan	LB	6-4/200	Tallahassee, FL	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,051
BJ Diakite	ATH	6-3/220	Pinson, AL	★★★	★★★	★★★	897
Drew Dickey	QB	6-1/204	Austin, TX	★★★	★★★★	★★★	984
Maurice Edwards	RB	6-0/195	Gurnee, IL	★★★	★★★	★★★	713
Quantaves Gaskins	DB	6-1/190	Atlanta, GA	★★★	★★★	★★★	608
Chase Gillespie	RB	5-9/180	Tallahassee, FL	★★★	★★★	★★★	990
Levi Harber	OT	6-5/265	Montrose, MI	★★★	★★★	★★	1,464
Bradley Mann	DL	6-6/260	Jacksonville, FL	★★★	★★★	★★★	647
Daniel Martin	LB	6-3/200	Marietta, GA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	270
Jayden McGowan	WR	5-8/177	Laurens, SC	★★★	★★★	★★★	786
Grayson Morgan	OT	6-5/270	Nashville, TN	★★★	★★★	★★★	835
Leyton Nelson	OT	6-4/275	Orlando, FL	★★★	★★★	★★★	560
Yilanan Ouattara	DL	6-7/274	Cologne, Ger.	★★★	★★★	★★★	872
Andrew Paige	WR	6-4/205	Goodlettsville, TN	★★★	★★★	★★	1,711
Langston Patterson	LB	6-1/220	Nashville, TN	★★★	★★★	★★★	507
Ja'Dais Richard	S	6-2/205	West Monroe, LA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	369
Savion Riley	ATH	6-2/190	Acworth, GA	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,285
Steven Sannieniola	S	6-2/190	Bowie, MD	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,003
David Siegel	OT	6-6/297	New Canaan, CT	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,644
Cole Spence	TE	6-6/220	Roswell, GA	★★★	★★★	★★★	892
AJ Swann	QB	6-3/215	White, GA	★★★	★★★	★★★★	407
Walter Taylor	QB	6-5/210	Jackson, AL	★★★	★★★	★★	1,552
Jeffrey Ugochukwu	S	6-1/180	Richmond, TX	★★★	★★★	★★★	898
Daveon Walker	WR	6-2/180	Warner Robins, GA	★★★	★★★	★★★	788
Jameson Wharton	CB	6-1/175	Hendersonville, TN	★★★	★★★	★★★	676
Linus Zunk	DL	6-6/235	Berlin, Ger.	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,005

ALABAMA CRIMSON TIDE

National Forecast: 1 • SEC West Prediction: 1 • Projected Record: 13-0, 8-0 SEC

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Nick Saban
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 183-25 (15 years)
CAREER RECORD: 274-67-1 (26 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Bill O'Brien
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Pete Golding
LOCATION: Tuscaloosa, AL
STADIUM: Bryant-Denny Stadium (100,077)

KEY CRIMSON TIDE

BRYCE YOUNG, QB Started all 15 games and became the program's fourth Heisman Trophy winner — and its first QB to earn the hardware.

WILL ANDERSON JR., OLB Led the nation with 34.5 tackles for a loss as arguably the best defensive player in the country.

JORDAN BATTLE, S The leader in the back end of the defense, Battle compiled 85 total tackles and three interceptions in his junior season.

KEY LOSSES

EVAN NEAL, LT Started at three different positions in his three seasons at UA, the last at left tackle, where he became one of the best linemen in the nation.

JAMESON WILLIAMS, WR Williams possessed speed that completely changed the course of the offense in 2021.

JOHN METCHIE III, WR Led the team with 96 receptions in 13 games (he missed the CFP with an ACL injury). The team's most consistent receiver.

THE VERDICT

Alabama is the overwhelming favorite to win it all in 2022. The Crimson Tide return arguably the two best players in college football — quarterback Bryce Young and linebacker Will Anderson Jr. — and used the transfer portal to bolster needs along the offensive line and add playmakers to Young's arsenal in Jahmyr Gibbs, Jermaine Burton and Tyler Harrell. The offensive line remains Nick Saban's biggest concern, but a favorable schedule allows the staff to find the right five before key SEC matchups against Texas A&M and LSU — and the expected showdown against Georgia in Atlanta.

POSTSEASON: National Championship vs. Ohio State

BETTORS' BOX

ALABAMA FUTURES

ODDS TO WIN NATIONAL TITLE: 2/1
ODDS TO WIN SEC: -110
ODDS TO WIN SEC WEST: -350
SEASON WIN O/U: 11.5 (Under -150)
HEISMAN CONTENDERS: QB Bryce Young (4/1); LB Will Anderson Jr. (60/1); RB Jahmyr Gibbs (150/1); RB Trey Sanders (150/1); RB Jase McClellan (300/1); WR Jermaine Burton (300/1)
BETTORS' BYTE: The Tide had been a favorite by 14 or more for 15 straight games until their last two vs. UGA, when they closed as an underdog in each.

Information provided by the Bet the Board staff

Alabama's status as a preseason favorite to make the College Football Playoff isn't exactly a novel concept. It's where Nick Saban's teams have lived since the CFP's inception in 2014. Only once in that time have the Crimson Tide not made the playoff. It should surprise precisely no one that that's exactly where they're favored to land again this season.

Alabama returns arguably the top two players in college football in quarterback Bryce Young and linebacker Will Anderson Jr. Young won the Heisman Trophy in his first season as a starter, and Anderson took home an armful of defensive awards and finished fifth in Heisman Trophy voting. They are the rock stars and leaders of the nation's best team.

OFFENSE With Young back under center, much will be expected out of this unit. However, this year's edition may lean a little more on the run game thanks to a stable full of excellent running backs and a relatively inexperienced wide receiver corps.

Transfer running back Jahmyr Gibbs is set to take the SEC by storm after playing in relative obscurity at Georgia Tech. He's got talent in abundance, and his speed fits right in with offensive coordinator Bill O'Brien's offense. Gibbs averaged 5.2 yards per carry in his two-year career for the Yellow Jackets and was a threat in the passing game, catching 60 passes with five touchdowns. Jase McClellan and Roydell Williams both return from knee injuries and add depth to the position.

Wideout Jermaine Burton beat Alabama for the national championship in his last game for Georgia and then transferred to UA. No doubt, the opportunity to play with Young was a key reason. Burton wasn't featured at Georgia, but his skill set is comparable to that of John Metchie III, who caught 96 passes for the Tide in 2021.

Much is dependent on a rebuilt offensive line that loses first-round left tackle Evan Neal. The group is full of big, athletic road graders, so getting push shouldn't be as much of an issue as it was a season ago, when short-yardage situations were anything but a given. Three starters return, all on the interior of the line. It's the tackle spots that will be watched most closely.

What's left to say about Young that hasn't already been written or said? He was a playmaker and the reason Alabama won its 29th SEC championship last season. Even without the Tide's top two receivers, he helped UA to a fourth-quarter lead in the national championship game. He'll be expected to produce on a similar level this year even without the proven targets at wide receiver.

DEFENSE On defense, it all starts with Anderson, who put up a historically great season in 2021. His 17.5 sacks as the primary center of attention of opposing offenses stood out, but his 34.5 tackles for a loss made his season truly remarkable. That might be hard to top, but one thing is sure: He's nearly impossible to block one-on-one.

His bookend is back this season. Dallas Turner had 8.5 sacks of his own, and the pair proved too tough for the Alabama offensive line to handle during the spring.

Saban says that the coaching staff is working on ways

BRYCE YOUNG

Tom DiPace

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Utah State
Sept. 10	at Texas
Sept. 17	ULM
Sept. 24	Vanderbilt
Oct. 1	at Arkansas
Oct. 8	Texas A&M
Oct. 15	at Tennessee
Oct. 22	Mississippi State
Nov. 5	at LSU
Nov. 12	at Ole Miss
Nov. 19	Austin Peay
Nov. 26	Auburn

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 13-2, 7-1 SEC

Sept. 4	vs. Miami (Fla.) #	W	44-13
Sept. 11	Mercer	W	48-14
Sept. 18	at Florida	W	31-29
Sept. 25	Southern Miss	W	63-14
Oct. 2	Ole Miss	W	42-21
Oct. 9	at Texas A&M	L	38-41
Oct. 16	at Mississippi State	W	49-9
Oct. 23	Tennessee	W	52-24
Nov. 6	LSU	W	20-14
Nov. 13	New Mexico State	W	59-3
Nov. 20	Arkansas	W	42-35
Nov. 27	at Auburn (ot)	W	24-22
Dec. 4	vs. Georgia #	W	41-24
Dec. 31	vs. Cincinnati %	W	27-6
Jan. 10	vs. Georgia &	L	18-33

#Atlanta %Cotton Bowl: CFB Playoff Semifinal &Indianapolis: CFB Playoff National Championship

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	39.9 ppg	1	6
Rushing	150.0 ypg	10	75
Passing	338.2 ypg	2	7
Total	488.2 ypg	2	7

DEFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	20.1 ppg	3	18
Rushing	86.0 ypg	2	4
Passing	218.1 ypg	7	50
Total	304.1 ypg	2	7

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
+9	+0.60	2	21

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	29.5	51
Defense	27.3	26
Margin	+2.2	32
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	46.7%	28
Defense	37.5%	13
Margin	+9.2%	9
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	6.6	17
Defense	4.8	8
Margin	+1.8	5
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.5	34
Defense	4.0	58
Margin	+0.5	47
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	-0.3	74
Actual	8	19
Margin	+8.3	6

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

50.6%

Alabama's defense held opponents to just a 36 percent success rate last season; 50.6 percent of all opponent runs went for fewer than three yards.

1.29

Alabama's offense ranked 21st in success rate. When they were successful, though, the Tide blew defenses away, averaging 1.29 EPA per successful play.

52.1%

Alabama averaged 6.8 yards to go on third downs, ranking 93rd in the nation. Despite that distance, Alabama converted 52.1 percent of the time, ranking fifth in the nation.

to get Chris Braswell on the field with them at the same time. That would put the three best pass rushers on the field together and could be the stuff of nightmares for offenses trying to protect their quarterbacks.

The defensive line doesn't have the kind of brand-name players that the edge rushers boast, but the rotation is expected to be deep, which should help keep the unit fresh in games and throughout the season.

Henry To'oTo'o is back for his fourth year as a starter — two with Tennessee and now two with Alabama. He's a tough and instinctive 'backer who played through pain last season. He'll have a new running mate beside him this year after Christian Harris opted for the NFL. Jaylen Moody, the most experienced candidate, had a solid spring and is in good position to earn the starting nod. Deontae Lawson is the other candidate.

Jordan Battle is the most experienced player in the secondary and a great athlete. He compiled 85 tackles and three interceptions at safety last season. He's the leader in the back end of the defense.

There's a three-man competition for the two cornerback spots. Kool-Aid McKinstry seems a lock at one of the spots, leaving Khyree Jackson and LSU transfer Eli Ricks battling for the second spot. Ricks was injured last season and subsequently lost weight. He's fought to add the weight back and learn the defense.

Brian Branch really came into his own late last season, and that carried over into an excellent spring. The Star defensive back is set for an excellent junior season.

SPECIALISTS Placekicker Will Reichard has had two solid seasons in an area that has been known to give Alabama some trouble. He made 79 percent of his attempts last season. Punter James Burnip averaged 39.1 yards on 48 punts and dropped 15 inside the 20. The Tide will have to replace Jameson Williams on returns, but Saban likes the speedy options he has on hand.

FINAL ANALYSIS Bad sign for college football: Saban really likes this team, calling it a "fun group to coach." This group seems to have the intangibles that other great Saban teams have boasted.

"This team's been really good," he says. "This team doesn't have any complainers; guys just do what they're coached to do. They work hard. We don't have a lot of negative guys on this team, and we have some real positive leadership, which I think is always important. And hopefully we can build on that, and that will be something that's an asset to this team."

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

WR	3	Jermaine Burton (Jr.)	12	Christian Leary (So.)
WR	7	Ja'Corey Brooks (So.)	11	Traeshon Holden (Jr.)
WR	10	JoJo Earle (So.)	83	Kendrick Law (Fr.)
LT		Tyler Steen (Jr.)	60	Kendall Randolph (Sr.)
LG	**70**	**Javion Cohen (Jr.)**	69	Terrence Ferguson II (Fr.)
C	56	Seth McLaughlin (So.)	**71**	**Darrian Dalcourt (Sr.)**
RG	**55**	**Emil Ekiyor Jr. (Sr.)**	74	Damieon George Jr. (Jr.)
RT	65	JC Latham (So.)	54	Tyler Booker (Fr.)
TE	**81**	**Cameron Latu (Sr.)**	45	Robbie Ouzts (So.)
QB	**9**	**Bryce Young (Jr.)**	2	Jalen Milroe (Fr.)
RB	13	Jahmyr Gibbs (Jr.)	21	Jase McClellan (Jr.)

DEFENSE (7)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	92	Justin Eboigbe (Sr.)	52	Braylen Ingraham (Jr.)
DT	**94**	**DJ Dale (Sr.)**	50	Tim Smith (Jr.)
DE	**47**	**Byron Young (Sr.)**	93	Jah-Marien Latham (So.)
JACK	**31**	**Will Anderson Jr. (Jr.)**	41	Chris Braswell (Jr.)
SLB	15	Dallas Turner (So.)	37	Demouy Kennedy (Jr.)
MLB	**10**	**Henry To'oTo'o (Sr.)**	40	Kendrick Blackshire (So.)
WLB	42	Jaylen Moody (Sr.)	32	Deontae Lawson (Fr.)
CB	1	Kool-Aid McKinstry (So.)	12	Terrion Arnold (Fr.)
CB	6	Khyree Jackson (Sr.)	7	Eli Ricks (Jr.)
SS	**9**	**Jordan Battle (Sr.)**	**14**	**Brian Branch (Jr.)**
FS	**2**	**DeMarcco Hellams (Sr.)**	27	DeVonta Smith (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	16	Will Reichard (Sr.)	KR	13	Jahmyr Gibbs (Jr.)
P	86	James Burnip (So.)	PR	10	JoJo Earle (So.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Bryce Young	**547**	**366**	**4,872**	**47**	**7**
Paul Tyson	16	10	150	0	0
Jalen Milroe	**7**	**3**	**41**	**1**	**0**

Rushing	ATT	YDS	AVG	TD
Brian Robinson Jr.	271	1,343	5.0	14
Trey Sanders	**72**	**314**	**4.4**	**2**
Roydell Williams	**48**	**284**	**5.9**	**1**
Jase McClellan	**40**	**191**	**4.8**	**1**
Jalen Milroe	**15**	**57**	**3.8**	**0**

Receiving	REC	YDS	AVG	TD
John Metchie III	96	1,142	11.9	8
Jameson Williams	79	1,572	19.9	15
Slade Bolden	42	408	9.7	3
Brian Robinson Jr.	35	296	8.5	2
Cameron Latu	**26**	**410**	**15.8**	**8**

KICKING: **Will Reichard, 22-28 FGs, 137 pts.**
TACKLES: **Henry To'oTo'o, 112; Will Anderson Jr., 102**
SACKS: **Will Anderson Jr., 17.5**
INTERCEPTIONS: 3 players tied with 3

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE CRIMSON TIDE

Opposing Coaches Size Up Alabama

"If you're sick of Bama, buckle up, because it's going to be the longest season of your life. Right now, they project to have the best offensive and defensive player in the country and have the deepest roster in the best conference in the nation. They're a de facto pick to win the SEC and the national championship. … Nick Saban loves a losing year, even in the national title, because it kills whatever assumption that current group might have about their value. He's a genius because he can reduce all that success from last season into a lesson about failure, and they'll have to buy into the work ethic. It's amazing. … The roster, at this point, is just a joke to talk about. Pick a position. We don't scout them based on what they've lost. No other place in the country is like this. They aren't new faces so much as players who haven't beat you yet. … They have a receiving corps any roster in the country would swap for, and you can make the argument that was the position group that cost them the title game, and only because of multiple injuries. … If Bryce Young doesn't win the Heisman back-to-back, it could be because of Jahmyr Gibbs. He already looks like he belongs there, and they could be ridiculous with that combination. … The more you look at the roster, the more anticlimactic the 2022 season looks. They were banged up against a once-in-a-generation defense they'd already beaten; otherwise they'd be set for a repeat run this season."

OUTSIDE THE HUDDLE

NATION'S BEST That descriptor for Will Anderson Jr. won't be disputed by those who saw his historic sophomore season during which he recorded 34.5 tackles for a loss and 17.5 sacks. He actually garnered a fair amount of support for the Heisman Trophy in an era when defensive winners are unheard of. He returns for his junior season as a known quantity and major disruptor to opposing offenses. He's already drawn comparisons to legendary Crimson Tide linebacker Derrick Thomas.

O-LINE BOUNCE-BACK Last year's group was not a vintage offensive line for the Crimson Tide. It wasn't bad, but relative to UA standards, it had trouble creating push, and the right tackle position was an issue all season. In no game was this more evident than in the Iron Bowl, when Auburn sacked Bryce Young seven times. Evan Neal is gone at left tackle, too. Vanderbilt transfer Tyler Steen is expected to inject competition at left tackle, but right tackle isn't settled either. The interior of the line, with guards Emil Ekiyor Jr. and Javion Cohen and center Seth McLaughlin, seems in much better hands. It's the tackles that need to be watched.

WILL ANDERSON JR.

NEXT MAN UP Alabama's run of wide receiver talent over the past five years has been staggering. Jerry Jeudy, Henry Ruggs III, DeVonta Smith, Jaylen Waddle and Jameson Willaims all went in the first round of the NFL Draft, and John Metchie III was a second-round pick this year. Alabama went into the transfer portal to help solve the issue of departed talent. Georgia's Jermaine Burton is the most experienced receiver on the team, and Louisville transfer Tyler Harrell is a speedster who averaged 29.1 yards per reception for the Cardinals in 2021. Aaron Anderson is a freshman who's made some noise; former five-star Ja'Corey Brooks was the hero of the Iron Bowl; and Traeshon Holden got opportunities last year.

THE REAL DEAL Georgia Tech transfer running back Jahmyr Gibbs was the talk of spring practice, and his 75-yard TD run in the A-Day game revealed why. "Fast is fast," Nick Saban says of Gibbs' talent. He's got speed and shiftiness and can catch the ball out of the backfield. He's the odds-on favorite to lead the team in yards from scrimmage.

RISING STAR

Freshman wide receiver **AARON ANDERSON** enrolled early and with a solid spring earned some plaudits from head coach Nick Saban. Alabama needs multiple receivers to step up this year, and Anderson has as good a chance as any of the other inexperienced targets.

2022 ALABAMA ROSTER

QUARTERBACKS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
18 Jarrett, Blake	6-2/186	So.	San Diego, CA
2 Milroe, Jalen	6-2/212	Fr.	Katy, TX
15 Simpson, Ty	6-2/198	Fr.	Martin, TN
9 Young, Bryce	6-0/194	Jr.	Pasadena, CA

RUNNING BACKS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
25 Bennett, Jonathan	5-8/180	Jr.	Birmingham, AL
29 Crockett, Elijah	5-11/210	So.	Chino Hills, CA
13 Gibbs, Jahmyr	5-11/200	Jr.	Dalton, GA
21 McClellan, Jase	5-11/212	Jr.	Aledo, TX
26 Miller, Jamarion	5-10/201	Fr.	Tyler, TX
6 Sanders, Trey	6-0/214	Jr.	Port Saint Joe, FL
23 Williams, Roydell	5-10/212	Jr.	Hueytown, AL

RECEIVERS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
82 Anderson, Aaron	5-9/184	Fr.	New Orleans, LA
36 Bolin, Bret	6-0/176	Sr.	Lemont, IL
88 Boykins, Jacoby	5-11/182	So.	Houston, TX
7 Brooks, Ja'Corey	6-2/196	So.	Miami, FL
86 Bulock, J'Kolbe	6-3/175	So.	Dallas, TX
3 Burton, Jermaine	6-0/200	Jr.	Calabasas, CA
10 Earle, JoJo	5-10/177	So.	Aledo, TX
Harrell, Tyler	6-0/194	So.	Miami, FL
11 Holden, Traeshon	6-3/214	Jr.	Kissimmee, FL
14 Jones-Bell, Thaiu	6-0/190	Jr.	Hallandale, FL
89 Krieger, Grant	6-2/192	Sr.	Pittsburgh, PA
83 Law, Kendrick	5-11/193	Fr.	Shreveport, LA
12 Leary, Christian	5-10/175	So.	Orlando, FL
37 Willoughby, Sam	5-10/165	Jr.	Vestavia Hills, AL

TIGHT ENDS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
85 Brown, Elijah	6-5/238	Fr.	Dayton, OH
43 Ellis, Robert	6-0/220	Jr.	Enterprise, AL
81 Latu, Cameron	6-5/244	Sr.	Salt Lake City, UT
45 Ouzts, Robbie	6-4/258	So.	Rock Hill, SC
49 Porter, Jax	6-6/232	Fr.	Dallas, TX
44 Skehan, Charlie	6-1/232	Jr.	Columbia, SC
80 Thorsland, Adam	6-5/232	So.	Walhalla, SC

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
54 Booker, Tyler	6-5/332	Fr.	New Haven, CT
51 Bowles, Tanner	6-5/293	Jr.	Glasgow, KY
58 Brockermeyer, James	6-3/282	Fr.	Fort Worth, TX
76 Brockermeyer, Tommy	6-5/304	Fr.	Fort Worth, TX
70 Cohen, Javion	6-4/305	Jr.	Phenix City, AL
71 Dalcourt, Darrian	6-3/305	Sr.	Havre de Grace, MD
55 Ekiyor Jr., Emil	6-3/307	Sr.	Indianapolis, IN
69 Ferguson II, Terrence	6-4/300	Fr.	Fort Valley, GA
74 George Jr., Damieon	6-6/333	Jr.	Houston, TX
78 Kight, Amari	6-7/322	Jr.	Alabaster, AL
65 Latham, JC	6-6/326	So.	Oak Creek, WI
56 McLaughlin, Seth	6-4/295	So.	Buford, GA
60 Randolph, Kendall	6-4/298	Sr.	Madison, AL
77 Roberts, Jaeden	6-5/302	Fr.	Houston, TX
62 Roby, Jackson	6-5/285	Sr.	Huntsville, AL
61 Roten, Graham	6-3/285	So.	Fairview, TN
75 Shor, Dayne	6-5/308	Fr.	Alpharetta, GA
Steen, Tyler	6-5/315	Jr.	Miami, FL

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
59 Barnes Jr., Anquin	6-5/305	Fr.	Montgomery, AL
98 Burroughs, Jamil	6-3/309	Jr.	Powder Springs, GA
94 Dale, DJ	6-3/300	Sr.	Birmingham, AL
92 Eboigbe, Justin	6-5/292	Sr.	Forest Park, GA
95 Goodwine, Monkell	6-4/288	Fr.	Upper Marlboro, MD
52 Ingraham, Braylen	6-4/295	Jr.	Fort Lauderdale, FL
96 Keenan III, Tim	6-2/343	Fr.	Birmingham, AL
93 Latham, Jah-Marien	6-3/278	So.	Reform, AL
91 Oatis, Jaheim	6-5/370	Fr.	Columbia, MS
44 Payne Jr., Damon	6-4/303	Fr.	Belleville, MI
97 Perry, Khurtiss	6-2/264	Fr.	Pike Road, AL
57 Quigley, Chase	6-1/236	So.	Libertyville, IL
50 Smith, Tim	6-4/304	Jr.	Gifford, FL
47 Young, Byron	6-3/292	Sr.	Laurel, MS

LINEBACKERS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
35 Alexander, Jeremiah	6-2/258	Fr.	Alabaster, AL
31 Anderson Jr., Will	6-4/243	Jr.	Hampton, GA
40 Blackshire, Kendrick	6-2/233	So.	Duncanville, TX
41 Braswell, Chris	6-3/240	Jr.	Baltimore, MD
30 Campbell, Jihaad	6-3/225	Fr.	Erial, NJ
54 Flood Jr., Kyle	6-0/212	Jr.	Middlesex, NJ
36 Jackson, Ian	6-1/235	Fr.	Prattville, AL
58 Johnson, Christian	6-5/230	So.	Flowery Branch, GA
37 Kennedy, Demouy	6-3/220	Jr.	Theodore, AL
19 Koht, Keanu	6-4/231	Fr.	Vero Beach, FL
32 Lawson, Deontae	6-2/225	Fr.	Mobile, AL
42 Moody, Jaylen	6-2/225	Sr.	Conway, SC
43 Murphy, Shawn	6-2/224	Fr.	Manassas, VA
34 Robinson, Quandarrius	6-5/224	So.	Birmingham, AL
49 Smith, Jordan	5-10/210	Jr.	Chelsea, AL
10 To'oTo'o, Henry	6-2/228	Sr.	Sacramento, CA
15 Turner, Dallas	6-4/240	So.	Fort Lauderdale, FL
55 Whisenhunt, Bennett	6-1/222	Jr.	Vestavia Hills, AL

DEFENSIVE BACKS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
12 Arnold, Terrion	6-0/188	Fr.	Tallahassee, FL
9 Battle, Jordan	6-1/206	Sr.	Fort Lauderdale, FL
14 Branch, Brian	6-0/193	Jr.	Tyrone, GA
22 Fegans, Tre'Quon	6-2/185	Fr.	Alabaster, AL
2 Hellams, DeMarcco	6-1/208	Sr.	Washington, DC
6 Jackson, Khyree	6-3/198	Sr.	Upper Marlboro, MD
38 McBride, Jacobi	6-1/143	Jr.	Madison, AL
1 McKinstry, Kool-Aid	6-1/188	So.	Birmingham, AL
13 Moore, Malachi	6-0/190	Jr.	Trussville, AL
29 Pugh, Blake	6-0/175	So.	Birmingham, AL
7 Ricks, Eli	6-2/190	Jr.	Rancho Cucamonga, CA
23 Robinson, Jahquez	6-2/197	Jr.	Jacksonville, FL
27 Smith, DeVonta	6-0/185	So.	Cincinnati, OH
11 Story, Kristian	6-1/211	So.	Lanett, AL

SPECIALISTS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
82 Allen, Chase (K)	6-2/188	Jr.	Colleyville, TX
86 Burnip, James (P)	6-6/211	So.	Mount Macedon, Aus.
51 Hibbett, Kneeland (LS)	6-2/245	So.	Florence, AL
95 Martin, Jack (P)	6-2/207	Sr.	Dothan, AL
50 Pugh, Gabe (LS)	6-5/273	Jr.	Tuscaloosa, AL
16 Reichard, Will (K)	6-1/190	Sr.	Hoover, AL
97 Schuback, Reid (K)	6-0/185	So.	Poway, CA
53 Wehby, Kade (LS)	5-9/185	So.	Plantation, FL

Tom DiPace

2022 **SIGNEES**

As has become standard under Nick Saban, Alabama again finished near the top of the recruiting rankings with its 25-member class ranking second, behind only Texas A&M. The breakdown includes three five-star players, 19 four-stars and three three-stars. Not included in that total are the players brought in via the transfer portal, all of whom are presumed starters, including Eli Ricks (LSU), Jermaine Burton (Georgia), Jahmyr Gibbs (Georgia Tech) and Tyler Steen (Vanderbilt). The transfer market was kind to the Crimson Tide in 2021 with the additions of Jameson Williams and Henry To'oTo'o, and it's expected to provide some key pieces once again.

All the needs of the class were met across the board, led by two edge players and a high-profile quarterback in Ty Simpson. Grabbing a quality quarterback in every class has become a necessity, especially in light of the popularity of the transfer portal, which allows backup quarterbacks to transfer more easily than ever. Adding Simpson to go with Bryce Young and Jalen Milroe was a top priority with Paul Tyson transferring to Arizona State in the offseason.

Running back, which was already stacked with talent, got even better with the arrival of Gibbs and the addition of four-star prospects Emmanuel Henderson and Jamarion Miller.

All in all, the Crimson Tide landed 15 of the 247Composite's top-100 players in the country and finished in the recruiting rankings' top two for a fourth season in a row. The class included the top two edge rushers, the third-ranked quarterback and the seventh-ranked offensive tackle. It also included two top-100 defensive linemen, an area that needed to be addressed. Khurtiss Perry was one of the top-rated players in the state of Alabama, and Jaheim Oatis is a jumbo-sized player who has created a stir. Weighing in at over 400 pounds when he arrived in Tuscaloosa, Oatis has already lost more than 40 pounds.

BY POSITION

Defensive Linemen	4
Athletes	4
Wide Receivers	3
Offensive Linemen	3
Linebackers	3
Defensive Backs	3
Running Backs	2
Tight Ends	2
Quarterbacks	1

BY STATE

Alabama	6
Louisiana	5
Georgia	4
Florida	3
Connecticut	1
Mississippi	1
New Jersey	1
Ohio	1
Tennessee	1
Texas	1
Virginia	1
Canada	1

RECRUIT SPOTLIGHT

JEREMIAH ALEXANDER

Edge • Alabaster, AL

Jeremiah Alexander is more than just the top-rated player in the state of Alabama in his recruiting class, although he is that. He's a five-star edge player on a team that's producing top-shelf talent at an accelerated rate.

His Thompson High teammate, Tre'Quon Fegans, is now his teammate on the Crimson Tide, and a pair of his fellow Warriors, Peter Woods and Tony Mitchell, are five-star prospects in their own right as high school seniors. Together, they formed a hellacious defense at Thompson High School and could all reunite in Tuscaloosa. Their common denominator: individual competitiveness.

"It pisses us off when teams score," Alexander says. "It's kind of like a letdown, you know, because everybody has all these big expectations. We try to ignore that, but at the same time, it kind of motivates us. So I just feel like when we let someone score, it's bad."

Alexander actually committed to Alabama twice. He was Alabama's first verbal commitment in the 2022 class when he made his decision in March 2020. He backed off that pledge seven months later and decommitted. He took his time, did his research, seemed to flirt with Clemson and ended up back at the beginning in the summer in 2021, committing to Alabama again on July 8. He's built similarly to former Tide outside linebacker Ryan Anderson.

Name	Pos	Ht/Wt	Hometown	247	ESPN	Rivals	Nat. Rank
Jeremiah Alexander	EDGE	6-2/250	Alabaster, AL	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	17
Aaron Anderson	WR	5-9/184	New Orleans, LA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	35
Walter Bob	DL	6-4/245	Lafayette, LA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	300
Isaiah Bond	ATH	5-11/175	Buford, GA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	52
Tyler Booker	OT	6-5/332	New Haven, CT	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	57
Elijah Brown	TE	6-5/238	Dayton, OH	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	312
Jihaad Campbell	EDGE	6-3/225	Erial, NJ	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	21
Tre'Quon Fegans	CB	6-2/185	Alabaster, AL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	117
Isaiah Hastings	DL	6-4/290	Toronto, ON	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	235
Emmanuel Henderson	RB	6-1/185	Hartford, AL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	40
Antonio Kite	ATH	6-1/180	Anniston, AL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	165
Kendrick Law	ATH	5-11/193	Shreveport, LA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	86
Danny Lewis	TE	6-4/255	New Iberia, LA	★★★	★★★	★★★	618
Earl Little Jr.	CB	6-1/180	Fort Lauderdale, FL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	106
Jamarion Miller	RB	5-10/201	Tyler, TX	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	87
Shawn Murphy	LB	6-2/224	Manassas, VA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	72
Amari NiBlack	ATH	6-4/225	Clearwater, FL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	146
Jaheim Oatis	DL	6-5/370	Columbia, MS	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	71
Khurtiss Perry	DL	6-2/264	Pike Road, AL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	65
Jake Pope	S	6-1/190	Buford, GA	★★★	★★★★	★★★	399
Kobe Prentice	WR	5-10/171	Calera, AL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	78
Shazz Preston	WR	6-0/190	Saint James, LA	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	56
Elijah Pritchett	OT	6-6/300	Columbus, GA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	37
Dayne Shor	OT	6-5/308	Alpharetta, GA	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	392
Ty Simpson	QB	6-2/198	Martin, TN	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	26

ARKANSAS RAZORBACKS

National Forecast: 23 • SEC West Prediction: 3 • Projected Record: 8-4, 4-4 SEC

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Sam Pittman
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 12-11 (2 years)
CAREER RECORD: 12-11 (2 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Kendal Briles
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Barry Odom
LOCATION: Fayetteville, AR
STADIUM: Reynolds Razorback Stadium (76,212)

KEY RAZORBACKS

KJ JEFFERSON, QB His run-pass prowess unlocked the dangerous Kendal Briles attack, and his completion rate (67.3) and TD-to-INT ratio (21:4) were superb.

BUMPER POOL, LB Pool, who racked up 125 tackles to rank 10th among FBS players, has a chance to break the UA career tackles record.

JALEN CATALON, S Perhaps the best hammer safety at Arkansas since Steve Atwater, Catalon played hurt half the season before undergoing surgery.

KEY LOSSES

TREYLON BURKS, WR A man-coverage beater, Burks had a huge junior year with 1,104 receiving yards, 11 TDs and highlight-reel catches left and right.

MONTARIC BROWN, CB A physical edge defender, Brown tied for the SEC lead with five interceptions and set a good example for younger defensive backs.

JOHN RIDGEWAY, DT A space-eater on the inside who tied up double-teams, Ridgeway freed up the top tacklers for Barry Odom's defensive schemes.

THE VERDICT

The Razorbacks have exceeded preseason expectations in each of Sam Pittman's two seasons, but this team won't sneak up on the rest of the SEC this year. Arkansas can push for second in the West Division if quarterback KJ Jefferson continues to develop into one of the SEC's best and a replacement can be found for big-play receiver Treylon Burks. New faces litter the depth chart on defense, but there's optimism coordinator Barry Odom can maintain last year's production (22.9 points per game allowed), especially with reinforcements coming from the transfer ranks.

POSTSEASON: Music City Bowl vs. Iowa

BETTORS' BOX

ARKANSAS FUTURES

ODDS TO WIN NATIONAL TITLE: 150/1
ODDS TO WIN SEC: 100/1
ODDS TO WIN SEC WEST: 40/1
SEASON WIN O/U: 7 (Over -120)
HEISMAN CONTENDER: QB KJ Jefferson (100/1)
BETTORS' BYTE: The Razorbacks are 11-4 ATS when catching points since Sam Pittman became head coach.

Information provided by the Bet the Board staff

The 2021 season had to feel like emerging from a dark abyss and into the world of the living for Arkansas football fans.

The Razorbacks sputtered for most of four years before finally regaining their footing in the treacherous SEC West and shrugging off long losing streaks in trophy games against Texas A&M, LSU and Missouri. Add in a 40–21 blasting of Texas and a win over Penn State in the Outback Bowl, the Razorbacks' first bowl victory over a Big Ten team, and happy days were here again under Sam Pittman, who was negotiating a big raise and extension throughout the spring to start his third season.

Arkansas spent time in the top 10 and even gave Alabama a run for its money in Tuscaloosa for the first time in 14 years. The Razorbacks showed signs of becoming a contender.

Multiple key parts from that team have departed, including ace receiver Treylon Burks, left tackle Myron Cunningham and top defenders Montaric Brown, Grant Morgan, John Ridgeway and Tre Williams. However, quarterback KJ Jefferson is back to operate the run-pass option attack, and Pittman managed to retain coordinators Kendal Briles, Barry Odom and Scott Fountain, giving the Razorbacks much-needed continuity and the makings of a tough-to-beat club.

OFFENSE Briles suggested Jefferson might complete 65 percent of his passes in 2021, and the sophomore did better than that, hitting 198 of 294 (67.3 percent) for 2,676 yards, with 21 touchdowns and four interceptions.

Jefferson also led the team with 664 rushing yards. Three tailbacks joined Jefferson with 500-plus rushing yards, giving Arkansas four 500-yard rushers in a season for the first time since 1975.

The Razorbacks also averaged 200-plus yards passing (213.9) and rushing (an SEC-best 227.8) for the first time since 1971.

Tailbacks Raheim Sanders (578 yards, five TDs), Dominque Johnson (575, seven) and AJ Green (227, one) are back, running behind a line that returns four starters in RT Dalton Wagner, C Ricky Stromberg, LG Brady Latham and RG Beaux Limmer and is growing in size to fit the big Pittman mold.

Finding a trusty go-to receiver was an emphasis in spring, with transfer Jadon Haselwood, Warren Thompson and Ketron Jackson Jr. giving Jefferson tall, fast targets. Additionally, backup quarterback Malik Hornsby made a splash in the wideout corps during spring and might work both spots this season.

Tight end Trey Knox incurred a concussion from a car wreck early in spring drills. His premier speed for the position, solid hands and improving blocking make him a natural to pair with Hudson Henry at that spot.

DEFENSE The Razorbacks lost their top run-clogger in Ridgeway and their top pass-rush specialist in Williams but got off to a great start in camp with tackles Isaiah Nichols and Taurean Carter showing big improvement. Ends Eric Gregory, Zach Williams and Jashaud Stewart continue to improve as veterans. The Arkansas coaches

KJ JEFFERSON

Jay Biggerstaff

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Cincinnati
Sept. 10	South Carolina
Sept. 17	Missouri State
Sept. 24	vs. Texas A&M #
Oct. 1	Alabama
Oct. 8	at Mississippi State
Oct. 15	at BYU
Oct. 29	at Auburn
Nov. 5	Liberty
Nov. 12	LSU
Nov. 19	Ole Miss
Nov. 26	at Missouri

#Arlington, TX

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 9-4, 4-4 SEC

Sept. 4	Rice	W	38-17
Sept. 11	Texas	W	40-21
Sept. 18	Georgia Southern	W	45-10
Sept. 25	vs. Texas A&M #	W	20-10
Oct. 2	at Georgia	L	0-37
Oct. 9	at Ole Miss	L	51-52
Oct. 16	Auburn	L	23-38
Oct. 23	Arkansas-Pine Bluff	W	45-3
Nov. 6	Mississippi State	W	31-28
Nov. 13	at LSU	W	16-13
Nov. 20	at Alabama	L	35-42
Nov. 26	Missouri	W	34-17
Jan. 1	vs. Penn State %	W	24-10

#Arlington %Outback Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	30.9 ppg	6	48
Rushing	227.8 ypg	1	7
Passing	213.9 ypg	11	85
Total	441.7 ypg	6	27
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	22.9 ppg	6	39
Rushing	153.5 ypg	9	69
Passing	214.2 ypg	6	41
Total	367.7 ypg	7	50
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
+6	+0.46	3	31

are ready to mine the transfer portal following spring drills to add to the defensive line depth after landing Landon Jackson (LSU) and Jordan Domineck (Georgia Tech) over the winter.

Bumper Pool has assumed the leadership role filled by Morgan and Hayden Henry last year in the linebacker room, and the young talent at the spot is evident. Redshirt freshman Chris "Pooh" Paul Jr. has emerged as a potential starter, along with transfer Drew Sanders, a former five-star signee by Alabama, and the coaching staff likes freshmen Jordan Crook and Kaden Henley, along with redshirt sophomore Jackson Woodard. The Hogs are finally showing depth at linebacker.

The coaching staff was determined to give their cornerbacks tough man-coverage tests in spring by scheming a lot of blitzes to put on tape for post-spring teaching sessions. Hudson Clark remained with the top unit at corner, while Khari Johnson, transfer Dwight McGlothern and junior Malik Chavis spent time there. Johnson switched to the safety spot, where depth is improving behind Jalen Catalon, Simeon Blair and Jayden Johnson. Myles Slusher appears to have emerged as the top nickel back with other players cross-training throughout the back end.

SPECIALISTS Cam Little is back as the primary placekicker after turning in one of the finest freshman seasons for the program. Little, who made 20-of-24 field goals, has range to 55 yards or longer. Trusty kickoff man Vito Calvaruso transferred out. Returning punter Reid Bauer, the defending Mortell Award winner as the nation's best holder, could be pushed for the starting job by Aussie freshman Max Fletcher.

Bryce Stephens looks to be the leading candidate to return punts, while Green, Slusher and others are involved on kickoff returns.

FINAL ANALYSIS Strong recruiting has added taller, bigger players on both sides of the line and at receiver and defensive back as Pittman shapes the roster into a team that looks the part in the SEC West. Jefferson's presence at quarterback is a huge starting point. The run game would seemingly be in fine shape, but assembling a threatening receiving corps is essential for growth. The Razorbacks seem determined to improve their pass rush, even if it means bringing a fifth or sixth player into the pressure packages. All in all, this is a team that won its share of toss-up games in 2021 and seems prepared to do that for a long time to come.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

WR	84	Warren Thompson (Sr.)	4	Malik Hornsby (So.)
WR	9	Jadon Haselwood (Jr.)	14	Bryce Stephens (Fr.)
WR	2	Ketron Jackson Jr. (So.)	13	Jaedon Wilson (Fr.)
LT	70	Luke Jones (Sr.)	65	Devon Manuel (Fr.)
LG	**62**	**Brady Latham (Jr.)**	74	Jalen St. John (So.)
C	**51**	**Ricky Stromberg (Sr.)**	56	Marcus Henderson (So.)
RG	**55**	**Beaux Limmer (Jr.)**	76	E'Marion Harris (Fr.)
RT	**78**	**Dalton Wagner (Sr.)**	53	Ty'Kieast Crawford (Jr.)
TE	7	Trey Knox (Sr.)	82	Hudson Henry (Jr.)
QB	**1**	**KJ Jefferson (Jr.)**	4	Malik Hornsby (So.)
RB	5	Raheim Sanders (So.)	20	Dominique Johnson (Jr.)

DEFENSE (4)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	50	Eric Gregory (Jr.)	37	Eric Thomas Jr. (Jr.)
DT	93	Isaiah Nichols (Sr.)	5	Cameron Ball (Fr.)
DT	9	Taurean Carter (Jr.)	90	Marcus Miller (Jr.)
DE	56	Zach Williams (Sr.)	58	Jashaud Stewart (Jr.)
LB	10	Bumper Pool (Sr.)	27	Chris Paul Jr. (Fr.)
LB	42	Drew Sanders (Jr.)	36	Jordan Crook (Fr.)
CB	17	Hudson Clark (Jr.)	**24**	**LaDarrius Bishop (Sr.)**
CB	3	Dwight McGlothern (Jr.)	4	Malik Chavis (Jr.)
NB	**2**	**Myles Slusher (Jr.)**	6	Jacorrei Turner (So.)
S	**1**	**Jalen Catalon (Jr.)**	8	Jayden Johnson (So.)
S	**15**	**Simeon Blair (Sr.)**	19	Khari Johnson (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	29	Cam Little (So.)	KR	0	AJ Green (So.)
P	30	Reid Bauer (Sr.)	PR	14	Bryce Stephens (Fr.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
KJ Jefferson	**294**	**198**	**2,676**	**21**	**4**
Malik Hornsby	**12**	**5**	**46**	**0**	**0**

Rushing	ATT	YDS	AVG	TD
KJ Jefferson	**146**	**664**	**4.5**	**6**
Trelon Smith	119	598	5.0	5
Raheim Sanders	**114**	**578**	**5.1**	**5**
Dominique Johnson	**97**	**575**	**5.9**	**7**
AJ Green	**47**	**227**	**4.8**	**1**

Receiving	REC	YDS	AVG	TD
Treylon Burks	66	1,104	16.7	11
Tyson Morris	24	337	14.0	2
Trey Knox	**20**	**141**	**7.1**	**1**
Warren Thompson	**19**	**304**	**16.0**	**2**
De'Vion Warren	16	252	15.8	0

KICKING: **Cam Little, 20-24 FGs, 106 pts.**
TACKLES: **Bumper Pool, 125;** Grant Morgan, 101
SACKS: Tre Williams, 6.0
INTERCEPTIONS: Montaric Brown, 5

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE RAZORBACKS

Opposing Coaches Size Up Arkansas

"Don't take this as a knock on the head coach, but maybe the greatest coaching hire since Joe Brady went to LSU is Barry Odom to Arkansas. It's not even close. He's completely changed that culture, and they are absolutely playing above their talent level. They shouldn't be as effective as they are. … Sam [Pittman] is a great face for the program, a great leader, and has really brought home a lot of the cultural stuff that [Bret] Bielema wanted to install both in the program and with the fans and boosters but didn't have the right personality to do it. … The biggest change is that they're recruiting night and day better than the last staff, and the portal has helped them kind of shake off the Chad Morris era. Pittman knows talent; he was a grinder at Georgia. They're smart and they know how to evaluate, and they've done a nice job with the portal. … The offense gets a lot of headlines, but they need to take that next step in a lot of areas. Talent-wise, they're still not league quality at every position. The quarterback [KJ Jefferson] could be a really special player if [OC] Kendal [Briles] can build on last season and keep him healthy. … The floor has been permanently raised. They're going to be a huge pain in the ass for the elite teams for a long time. They embrace physical play, and they're hellbent to run on you. That's always gonna work."

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		Rank
Offense	28.3	84
Defense	28.7	61
Margin	-0.4	68
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	45.1%	42
Defense	40.3%	47
Margin	+4.8%	38
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	6.5	25
Defense	5.5	46
Margin	+1.0	28
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.6	26
Defense	3.6	29
Margin	+1.0	11
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	-1.5	90
Actual	5	32
Margin	+6.5	17

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

-0.033

The Razorbacks played one of the toughest schedules in football, and the defense held up. Arkansas held opponents to -0.033 EPA/play on the season, 22nd best in the FBS, and allowed just 46 plays of 20-plus yards, 39th nationally.

51.4%

On offense, Arkansas avoided third downs at a rate of 51.4 percent, 23rd best in the FBS. When the Hogs did face a third down, the average distance was 7.6 yards to go, 30th best.

36.8%

Despite the typically short distance faced, Arkansas ranked 90th in third-down conversion percentage (36.8).

OUTSIDE
THE HUDDLE

JALEN CATALON

Jay Biggerstaff

6-SECOND WARRIOR Instead of breaking it down to one game at a time or playing for four quarters, Arkansas defensive coordinator Barry Odom preaches a "six-second warrior" concept he adopted from former Missouri head coach Gary Pinkel. "If you play as hard as you can play for six seconds, OK, from the time the ball is snapped until the whistle blows, you're gonna give yourself and your defense a chance to play winning football," Odom says. "Somebody may go and miss a tackle, but if you've got 10 other guys running to the ball, then you're gonna keep that from going to an explosive play, so it all ties together. It's just an easy way for our guys to remember it."

NEW COACHES Sam Pittman has made it clear that every assistant on his staff must deliver in recruiting, which is one of the key reasons he brought aboard new cornerbacks coach Dominique Bowman and defensive line coach Deke Adams. "I'm really pleased with Deke and certainly with Dominique Bowman," Pittman says. "Let's face the facts — on this staff, you've got to recruit. If you're not an elite recruiter, that's not a good thing."

HORNSBY CATCHING ON Backup quarterback Malik Hornsby, who was in the transfer portal for a couple of days in the winter, changed his mind and came back amid growing possibilities. Hornsby took snaps as a receiver and displayed his game-changing speed on sweeps and with deep-ball receptions from Jefferson. He also motioned into the quarterback spot from the slot. Offensive coordinator Kendal Briles said Hornsby was having his best practices in the spring. "It is a unique balance with him," Briles says. "First of all, just incredibly pleased with where he's at, mentally over everything else. He's got the ability … but taking care of the football and making good decisions is above all else playing that position."

MANUFACTURED CHIP The Razorbacks succeeded as an underdog team last season, so Pittman doesn't relish the idea that some analysts might pick Arkansas as a dark horse contender in the brutal SEC West. He'd rather forecasters pick against the Razorbacks instead of rank them sixth in the country as one outlet did. "You still have to have that chip to prove somebody wrong," Pittman says. "And if nobody's talking bad about us, we'll just make it up." The players are adopting Pittman's chip-on-the-shoulder attitude. "I think Coach Pittman just brought this little swagger back," says safety Jalen Catalon.

RISING STAR

Receiver **KETRON JACKSON JR.** was an unpolished freshman when he earned snaps as a strong blocker. Now, he's primed to move up, with offensive coordinator Kendal Briles describing him as an "ultra-talented big guy" who can "separate and make contested catches."

2022 ARKANSAS ROSTER

QUARTERBACKS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
10 Fortin, Cade	6-3/222	Sr.	Suwanee, GA
4 Hornsby, Malik	6-2/187	So.	Missouri City, TX
1 Jefferson, KJ	6-3/245	Jr.	Sardis, MS
18 Renfro, Kade	6-3/197	So.	Stephenville, TX

RUNNING BACKS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
6 Dubinion, Rashod	5-10/189	Fr.	Ellenwood, GA
0 Green, AJ	5-11/202	So.	Tulsa, OK
21 Hunt, Javion	6-0/200	Fr.	Oklahoma City, OK
20 Johnson, Dominique	6-1/228	Jr.	Crowley, TX
25 Jointer, James	6-0/217	Fr.	Little Rock, AR
5 Sanders, Raheim	6-2/221	So.	Rockledge, FL

RECEIVERS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
85 Cole, Harper	5-9/176	So.	Aurora, IL
11 Crawford, Jaquayln	5-10/181	Sr.	Rockdale, TX
83 Harris, Chris	5-10/190	So.	Dumas, AR
9 Haselwood, Jadon	6-3/211	Jr.	Ellenwood, GA
2 Jackson Jr., Ketron	6-2/209	So.	Royse City, TX
81 McAdoo, Quincey	6-2/182	Fr.	Clarendon, AR
15 Rogers, Landon	6-4/201	Fr.	Little Rock, AR
14 Stephens, Bryce	6-0/173	Fr.	Oklahoma City, OK
84 Thompson, Warren	6-3/193	Sr.	Seffner, FL
13 Wilson, Jaedon	6-3/180	Fr.	DeSoto, TX

TIGHT ENDS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
46 Bax, Nathan	6-4/260	Jr.	Jefferson City, MO
87 Courtney, Dax	6-6/220	Fr.	Clarendon, AR
82 Henry, Hudson	6-5/257	Jr.	Little Rock, AR
39 Johnson, Nathan	6-4/212	So.	Little Rock, AR
7 Knox, Trey	6-5/233	Sr.	Murfreesboro, TN
42 Lee, Zach	6-5/233	So.	Bentonville, AR
36 Outley, Erin	6-4/268	Fr.	Little Rock, AR
80 Sutherland, Collin	6-5/253	So.	Flower Mound, TX
34 Talley, Hunter	6-4/218	Fr.	Siloam Springs, AR
8 Washington, Tyrus	6-4/221	Fr.	Leesburg, GA

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
50 Carson, Cole	6-5/298	Fr.	Bogata, TX
72 Chamblee, Andrew	6-6/311	Fr.	Maumelle, AR
53 Crawford, Ty'Kieast	6-5/347	Jr.	Carthage, TX
76 Harris, E'Marion	6-7/362	Fr.	Little Rock, AR
59 Henderson, Eli	6-4/315	Fr.	Duncan, SC
56 Henderson, Marcus	6-5/287	So.	Memphis, TN
70 Jones, Luke	6-5/327	Sr.	Little Rock, AR
62 Latham, Brady	6-5/303	Jr.	Jenks, OK
55 Limmer, Beaux	6-5/300	Jr.	Tyler, TX
65 Manuel, Devon	6-9/366	Fr.	Sunset, LA
79 Rathcke, Dylan	6-5/300	Jr.	Baton Rouge, LA
74 St. John, Jalen	6-5/334	So.	St. Louis, MO
67 Street, Josh	6-6/302	Fr.	Bentonville, AR
51 Stromberg, Ricky	6-4/318	Sr.	Tulsa, OK
78 Wagner, Dalton	6-9/337	Sr.	Spring Grove, IL
63 Wells, Terry	6-5/297	Fr.	Parkin, AR

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
5 Ball, Cameron	6-5/313	Fr.	Atlanta, GA
9 Carter, Taurean	6-3/298	Jr.	Mansfield, TX
Domineck, Jordan	6-3/253	Jr.	Lakeland, FL
50 Gregory, Eric	6-4/302	Jr.	Memphis, TN
Hampton, Terry	6-0/293	Sr.	El Dorado, AR
95 Hanna, Morgan	6-4/225	Jr.	Greenwood, AR
94 Hill, Jon	6-5/234	Fr.	Dumas, AR
55 Hollingsworth, JJ	6-3/249	Fr.	Greenland, AR
40 Jackson, Landon	6-7/275	So.	Texarkana, TX
90 Miller, Marcus	6-5/298	Jr.	Warren, AR
93 Nichols, Isaiah	6-3/302	Sr.	Springdale, AR
58 Stewart, Jashaud	6-2/243	Jr.	Jonesboro, AR
37 Thomas Jr., Eric	6-3/259	Jr.	Pensacola, FL
56 Williams, Zach	6-4/245	Sr.	Little Rock, AR

LINEBACKERS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
25 Avant, Marco	6-3/221	Fr.	Forrest City, AR
43 Both, Brooks	6-0/224	So.	Harrison, AR
36 Crook, Jordan	6-0/227	Fr.	Duncanville, TX
47 Hanna, Jordan	6-2/215	Fr.	Greenwood, AR
44 Henley, Kaden	6-2/222	Fr.	Springdale, AR
41 Moss, Logan	5-10/215	Fr.	DeWitt, AR
27 Paul Jr., Chris	6-1/232	Fr.	Cordele, GA
10 Pool, Bumper	6-2/232	Sr.	Lucas, TX
35 Powell, Mani	6-3/220	Fr.	Fayetteville, AR
42 Sanders, Drew	6-5/232	Jr.	Denton, TX
49 Williams, McKinley	6-1/200	Sr.	Sheridan, AR
45 Woodard, Jackson	6-3/228	So.	Little Rock, AR

DEFENSIVE BACKS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
24 Bishop, LaDarrius	6-0/200	Sr.	Ashdown, AR
15 Blair, Simeon	5-10/209	Sr.	Pine Bluff, AR
7 Brini, Latavious	6-2/211	Sr.	Miami Gardens, FL
22 Brown, Anthony	6-0/180	Fr.	Milan, TN
1 Catalon, Jalen	5-10/199	Jr.	Mansfield, TX
4 Chavis, Malik	6-2/200	Jr.	Rison, AR
17 Clark, Hudson	6-2/178	Jr.	Dallas, TX
26 Compton, Kevin	6-2/177	So.	Pine Bluff, AR
18 Gordon, Trent	5-11/190	Sr.	Spring, TX
8 Johnson, Jayden	6-2/216	So.	Cedartown, GA
19 Johnson, Khari	6-0/191	Jr.	Boston, MA
21 Lewis, Jaylen	6-0/172	Fr.	Brownsville, TN
13 Lowery, Chase	6-0/189	Fr.	Frisco, TX
3 McGlothern, Dwight	6-2/182	Jr.	Houston, TX
16 Parker, Keuan	5-11/178	Fr.	Tulsa, OK
2 Slusher, Myles	6-0/193	Jr.	Broken Arrow, OK
39 Snelling, Courtney	5-11/165	Sr.	Little Rock, AR
6 Turner, Jacorrei	6-2/208	So.	Atlanta, GA
20 Zimos, Zach	6-4/224	Jr.	Sugar Land, TX

SPECIALISTS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
19 Bates, Jacob (K)	5-10/203	Sr.	Tomball, TX
30 Bauer, Reid (P)	5-11/213	Sr.	Magnolia, TX
46 Castro, Francisco (LS)	6-1/208	Fr.	Miami, FL
31 Fletcher, Max (P)	6-5/168	Fr.	Melbourne, Australia
94 Foley, Patrick (P)	6-3/195	Fr.	Omaha, NE
29 Little, Cam (K/P)	6-2/176	So.	Moore, OK
52 Oehrlein, John (LS)	6-1/240	Jr.	Austin, TX
48 Stein, Eli (LS)	6-3/223	Fr.	Cambridge, WI

2022 **SIGNEES**

The Arkansas Razorbacks' pack of 2022 newcomers is like a case study in modern recruiting. The Hogs signed 16 scholarship freshmen who were early enrollees and seven players from the portal, six of whom went through spring drills.

Head coach Sam Pittman wants to keep getting bigger across the board, and the offensive line group reflects his desire for huge young talent with good feet in 6'6", 311-pound Andrew Chamblee, 6'7", 362-pound E'Marion Harris, 6'5", 284-pound Patrick Kutas, and 6'4", 315-pound Eli Henderson.

The class was big on linebackers, with Jordan Crook and Kaden Henley making strong impressions in camp while Mani Powell rehabilitated from knee surgery.

Tailback signees Rashod Dubinion and James Jointer joined a stacked position group, and Dubinion has quickly warranted praise from the coaching staff for his dedication and cutting ability.

A tight end room that was getting low on numbers added Tyrus Washington and Dax Courtney, who is recovering from left knee surgery, and a big class is expected to come in at the position next year.

On the wideout front, the Razorbacks recruited tall and fast. Quincey McAdoo is a little raw at 6'2", 182 pounds but has big potential. Isaiah Sategna, a 5'11", 175-pound speedster, is the highest-rated prospect in the class and was tearing up the outdoor track season at Fayetteville High. He and 6'3" Sam Mbake, one of the Hogs' three prep signees from Georgia, are scheduled to arrive in the summer.

The Razorbacks went light on defensive linemen, adding early enrollee JJ Hollingsworth and Nico Davillier, so scouring the transfer portal, where they also landed Landon Jackson and Jordan Domineck, for a can't-miss pass-rush specialist is a priority this summer.

Valuing the addition of specialists, Arkansas gave a scholarship to punter Max Fletcher, a willowy 6'5", 168-pounder with a big leg, and long snapper Eli Stein. Fletcher will have to beat out feisty Reid Bauer, the reigning Mortell Award winner as the nation's top holder.

Defensive backs Anthony Brown and Jaylen Lewis had already made some key plays with interceptions and breakups in the secondary through the halfway point of spring drills.

BY POSITION

Offensive Linemen	4
Linebackers	3
Wide Receivers	3
Defensive Linemen	2
Defensive Backs	2
Specialists	2
Tight Ends	2
Athletes	1
Running Backs	1

BY STATE

Arkansas	10
Georgia	3
Tennessee	3
South Carolina	1
Texas	1
Wisconsin	1
Australia	1

RECRUIT SPOTLIGHT

JADON HASELWOOD

WR • Ellenwood, GA

The Razorbacks' biggest winter pickup came via the transfer portal, as they landed former five-star wideout Jadon Haselwood, who originally signed with Oklahoma out of Cedar Grove (Ga.) High, where he played for current Arkansas running backs coach Jimmy Smith.

Haselwood made a variety of one-handed and contested catches early in spring ball, including one where he drove his left shoulder into the ground while holding on to the ball with his right arm. Haselwood battled the resulting shoulder injury through spring.

"I would compare myself to maybe DeAndre Hopkins," Haselwood says of the current Arizona Cardinal. "I'm trying to work on getting my speed back [and] get more crisp at route running. Getting more comfortable with the offense and just trying to learn as much as I can."

Haselwood has hauled in deep touchdown passes from both KJ Jefferson and Malik Hornsby. He doesn't want to compare Jefferson with his Oklahoma quarterbacks Spencer Rattler, now in the SEC at South Carolina, and Caleb Williams, now on the West Coast at USC.

"They're all different styles, you know, different conferences, so you really can't compare those, but I'd say I've played with some great talent, and I'm excited for what's in store for me and KJ," Haselwood says. "KJ, he's got a great touch pass."

Haselwood reached out to Smith after entering the transfer portal.

"He was kind of like a role model in my life in high school," Haselwood says. "He kind of grew me up and made me who I am today. So I just came to him for advice ... and I just figured it out and came here."

Name	Pos	Ht/Wt	Hometown	247	ESPN	Rivals	Nat. Rank
Anthony Brown	S	6-0/180	Milan, TN	★★★	★★★	★★★	547
Andrew Chamblee	OT	6-6/311	Maumelle, AR	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	304
Dax Courtney	TE	6-6/220	Clarendon, AR	★★★	★★★	★★★	974
Jordan Crook	LB	6-0/227	Duncanville, TX	★★★	★★★	★★★	559
Nico Davillier	DL	6-4/275	Maumelle, AR	★★★	★★★	★★★★	449
Rashod Dubinion	ATH	5-10/189	Ellenwood, GA	★★★	★★★	★★★★	395
Max Fletcher	P	6-5/168	Melbourne, Aus.	★★★	★★★	★★	1,907
E'Marion Harris	OT	6-7/362	Little Rock, AR	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	309
Eli Henderson	OL	6-4/315	Duncan, SC	★★★	★★★	★★★	913
Kaden Henley	LB	6-2/222	Springdale, AR	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,279
JJ Hollingsworth	DL	6-3/249	Greenland, AR	★★★	★★★	★★★	931
James Jointer	RB	6-0/217	Little Rock, AR	★★★	★★★	★★★	615
Patrick Kutas	OL	6-5/284	Memphis, TN	★★★★	★★★	★★★	375
Jaylen Lewis	CB	6-0/172	Brownsville, TN	★★★	★★★	★★★	564
Sam Mbake	WR	6-3/205	Kennesaw, GA	★★★	★★★	★★★	422
Quincey McAdoo	WR	6-2/182	Clarendon, AR	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	382
Mani Powell	LB	6-3/220	Fayetteville, AR	★★★	★★★	★★★	558
Isaiah Sategna	WR	5-11/175	Fayetteville, AR	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	137
Eli Stein	LS	6-3/223	Cambridge, WI	★★	★★	★★	2,160
Tyrus Washington	TE	6-4/230	Leesburg, GA	★★★	★★★	★★★	637

AUBURN TIGERS

National Forecast: 40 • SEC West Prediction: 7 • Projected Record: 6-6, 2-6 SEC

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Bryan Harsin
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 6-7 (1 year)
CAREER RECORD: 82-31 (9 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Eric Kiesau
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jeff Schmedding
LOCATION: Auburn, AL
STADIUM: Jordan-Hare Stadium (87,451)

KEY TIGERS

DERICK HALL, DE Hall led the Tigers with nine sacks and 12 tackles for a loss, and he has the talent to better those numbers in 2022 and challenge for first-team All-SEC honors.

TANK BIGSBY, RB One of the SEC's best running backs — maybe the best — Bigsby will be expected to carry a heavy load on his 6'0", 213-pound frame.

OWEN PAPPOE, LB Injuries have slowed him, but the talent is there. Fills a coach-on-the-field role for the Tigers.

KEY LOSSES

ROGER MCCREARY, CB Auburn's best cornerback recorded 14 pass breakups and two interceptions in 2021, earning first-team All-SEC honors.

ZAKOBY MCCLAIN, LB The senior linebacker led the team with 96 tackles in 2021 after leading the nation in 2020 with 113 stops. Had 268 tackles for his career.

BO NIX, QB The three-year starter had an up-and-down 2021 season but was still a known commodity.

THE VERDICT

Second-year head coach Bryan Harsin already sits on the hot seat after a tumultuous offseason preceded by a five-game losing streak to end 2021. For Harsin to cool the pressure in '22, jumpstarting the offense (5.3 yards per play in SEC games) is a must. A four-man quarterback battle will extend deep into the fall, and question marks remain at receiver and up front. The unquestioned strength of this group is a backfield featuring All-America candidate Tank Bigsby. Despite only five returning starters, the defense has enough talent to rank among the best in the SEC.

POSTSEASON: Gasparilla Bowl vs. Louisville

BETTORS' BOX

AUBURN FUTURES

ODDS TO WIN NATIONAL TITLE: 300/1
ODDS TO WIN SEC: 250/1
ODDS TO WIN SEC WEST: 100/1
SEASON WIN O/U: 5.5 (Over -130)
HEISMAN CONTENDER: RB Tank Bigsby (150/1)
BETTORS' BYTE: Auburn is an average football team at home; the Tigers are 14-14-2 ATS in the last 30 league games at Jordan-Hare.

Information provided by the Bet the Board staff

No head coach returns to a more awkward, unsettled situation than Bryan Harsin entering his second season at Auburn. After a disappointing 6–7 first season that included a five-game losing streak to end the year, Harsin witnessed his name very publicly dragged through the mud amid an investigation into his treatment of fellow coaches and players.

Harsin survived the investigation, but the scars remain. The program has experienced significant upheaval under Harsin, with the second-year head coach already on his third offensive coordinator and second defensive coordinator. Also gone is Auburn legacy and three-year starting quarterback Bo Nix, who transferred to Oregon. After everything that went down in the offseason, it is clear that Harsin needs to show improvement in 2022 if he wants to survive more than a couple seasons on the Plains.

OFFENSE Harsin's long-term future could hinge on which quarterback he picks as the starter this season. With Nix gone, there are plenty of options to choose from, but each comes with a set of pluses and minuses. The presumed favorite is Texas A&M transfer Zach Calzada, who was the only quarterback to defeat Alabama in the 2021 regular season but was limited during spring practice. Calzada feels like a high-floor, low-ceiling option for the Tigers unless he takes a big leap from how he played in College Station. Former LSU Tiger T.J. Finley started three games last season after Nix went down with an ankle injury — all losses — and finished the season with a 54.7 percent completion rate. The wild card is Oregon transfer Robby Ashford, who looked the best during Auburn's A-Day spring game but will likely slot in at No. 3 on the depth chart.

With uncertainty at quarterback, Auburn is going to have to rely on its running game to power the offense. The good news is that star running back Tank Bigsby has a strong argument as the best SEC running back and has returned for another season. Bigsby finished the 2021 season with 1,102 rushing yards and 10 touchdowns and should exceed those numbers in 2022, assuming Harsin opts for more of a ground-and-pound approach. He'll have a veteran offensive line blocking in front of him with multiple linemen returning for sixth seasons. The veteran group will need to be better in pass protection this year after struggling to protect Nix in 2021.

Outside of quarterback, the big question is where Auburn will get its productivity at the receiver position. Gone are Kobe Hudson (44 catches for 580 yards, four TDs) and Demetris Robertson (37 catches for 489 yards, four TDs), leaving the victor of the QB battle with few established targets. Shedrick Jackson is back for a sixth year, which helps, but the Tigers will need players like Ja'Varrius Johnson and Ze'Vian Capers to take big steps in 2022. John Samuel Shenker, who set Auburn records for tight end receptions in 2021, is a reliable target who should be well utilized again regardless of quarterback.

DERICK HALL

Paul Abell

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Mercer
Sept. 10	San Jose State
Sept. 17	Penn State
Sept. 24	Missouri
Oct. 1	LSU
Oct. 8	at Georgia
Oct. 15	at Ole Miss
Oct. 29	Arkansas
Nov. 5	at Mississippi State
Nov. 12	Texas A&M
Nov. 19	WKU
Nov. 26	at Alabama

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 6-7, 3-5 SEC

Sept. 4	Akron	W	60-10
Sept. 11	Alabama State	W	62-0
Sept. 18	at Penn State	L	20-28
Sept. 25	Georgia State	W	34-24
Oct. 2	at LSU	W	24-19
Oct. 9	Georgia	L	10-34
Oct. 16	at Arkansas	W	38-23
Oct. 30	Ole Miss	W	31-20
Nov. 6	at Texas A&M	L	3-20
Nov. 13	Mississippi State	L	34-43
Nov. 20	at South Carolina	L	17-21
Nov. 27	Alabama (ot)	L	22-24
Dec. 28	vs. Houston #	L	13-17

#Birmingham Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	27.8 ppg	11	71
Rushing	161.5 ypg	9	66
Passing	240.0 ypg	8	59
Total	401.5 ypg	10	67

DEFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	21.8 ppg	5	27
Rushing	128.1 ypg	5	29
Passing	245.8 ypg	12	96
Total	373.8 ypg	9	61

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
+1	+0.08	8	64

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	27.6	96
Defense	26.7	16
Margin	+0.9	50
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	42.9%	65
Defense	42.3%	61
Margin	+0.6%	67
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	5.9	68
Defense	5.4	39
Margin	+0.5	53
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	3.3	121
Defense	3.0	6
Margin	+0.3	60
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	-0.3	75
Actual	0	65
Margin	+0.3	62

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

-0.057

Auburn averaged -0.057 EPA/pass, good for 98th in the nation and second to last in the SEC. The Tigers allowed only 18 sacks but threw for just 14 touchdowns on the season.

35.1%

Auburn began 35.1 percent of all its drives inside its own 25-yard line. Hampered by poor field position, the Tigers earned a quality possession on 47.0 percent of drives, 74th in the FBS.

35.7%

Auburn's defense held opponents to a 35.7 percent rushing success rate (21st in FBS) and -0.108 EPA/rush (11th).

DEFENSE Former Vanderbilt head coach Derek Mason left after only one season as Auburn's defensive coordinator, opting to make a lateral move to accept the same position at Oklahoma State (and taking a big pay cut). Rather than find an outsider to run the defense, Harsin has turned to Jeff Schmedding, who was previously his defensive coordinator at Boise State and spent the 2021 season as Auburn's linebackers coach.

Schmedding takes over a group that loses quite a few of its most established players from the 2021 season. There is returning talent from the strength of last season's team, but there are question marks up and down the depth chart. Can anyone truly replace cornerback Roger McCreary? What about the heart and soul of the defense — linebackers Zakoby McClain and Chandler Wooten?

On paper, Auburn's offense doesn't have the firepower to get into shootouts and win, putting pressure on the defense to keep the Tigers in games. If Auburn's defense can meet that challenge, it will start with success upfront via linemen Derick Hall, Colby Wooden and Eku Leota. Hall had nine sacks in 2021 on his way to second-team All-SEC honors, and he looks primed to better that number this season. Owen Pappoe, the former five-star recruit, should be Auburn's best linebacker if he can stay healthy.

Auburn will miss McCreary and safety Smoke Monday in the secondary, but it still might be the strength of the unit. Nehemiah Pritchett, Donovan Kaufman, Jaylin Simpson and Zion Puckett are all talented and more than capable of making a big impact in the secondary. Oregon transfer cornerback D.J. James is going to push hard for a starting spot, too.

SPECIALISTS Auburn returns a veteran kicker in Anders Carlson, who was 14-of-21 on field goals before suffering a torn ACL against Mississippi State. Returning starting punter Oscar Chapman was terrific last season, finishing with a 44.1 yards per punt average. Pritchett and Kaufman provide solid options in the return game.

FINAL ANALYSIS Unfortunately for Harsin's job security, this feels like another six-win team. Auburn has a tough non-conference test against Penn State in Week 3 and has to travel to both Georgia and Alabama this season. Harsin badly needs one of his quarterback options to exceed expectations, but the optimism is dampened in Auburn.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	11	Shedrick Jackson (Sr.)	80	Ze'Vian Capers (Jr.)
WR	6	Ja'Varrius Johnson (Jr.)	3	Tar'Varish Dawson Jr. (Fr.)
WR	16	Malcolm Johnson Jr. (Jr.)	5	Jay Fair (Fr.)
LT	77	Kilian Zierer (Sr.)	68	Austin Troxell (Sr.)
LG	**71**	**Brandon Council (Sr.)**	62	Kameron Stutts (Sr.)
C	**52**	**Nick Brahms (Sr.)**	50	Jalil Irvin (Sr.)
RG	**58**	**Keiondre Jones (Jr.)**	54	Tate Johnson (Jr.)
RT	**68**	**Austin Troxell (Sr.)**	65	Alec Jackson (Sr.)
TE	**25**	**John Samuel Shenker (Sr.)**	86	Luke Deal (Jr.)
QB	10	Zach Calzada (So.)	1	T.J. Finley (Jr.)
RB	**4**	**Tank Bigsby (Jr.)**	27	Jarquez Hunter (So.)

DEFENSE (5)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	**29**	**Derick Hall (Sr.)**	55	Eku Leota (Sr.)
DT	99	Jayson Jones (So.)	3	Zykeivous Walker (Jr.)
DT	92	Marquis Burks (Sr.)	**50**	**Marcus Harris (Jr.)**
DE	**25**	**Colby Wooden (Jr.)**	58	Tobechi Okoli (Fr.)
LB	0	Owen Pappoe (Sr.)	35	Cam Riley (Jr.)
LB	32	Wesley Steiner (Jr.)	9	Eugene Asante (Jr.)
CB	**18**	**Nehemiah Pritchett (Sr.)**	15	A.D. Diamond (Fr.)
CB	1	Donovan Kaufman (So.)	5	J.D. Rhym (Fr.)
NB	36	Jaylin Simpson (Jr.)	10	D.J. James (Jr.)
S	**11**	**Zion Puckett (Jr.)**	21	Caleb Wooden (Fr.)
S	27	Marquise Gilbert (So.)	20	Cayden Bridges (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	26	Anders Carlson (Sr.)	**KR**	18	Nehemiah Pritchett (Sr.)
P	91	Oscar Chapman (Jr.)	**PR**	1	Donovan Kaufman (So.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	**ATT**	**COMP**	**YDS**	**TD**	**INT**
Bo Nix	323	197	2,293	11	3
T.J. Finley	**128**	**70**	**827**	**6**	**1**
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Tank Bigsby	**223**	**1,102**	**4.9**	**10**	
Jarquez Hunter	**89**	**593**	**6.7**	**3**	
Bo Nix	57	168	2.9	4	
Shaun Shivers	14	87	6.2	1	
Sean Jackson	**12**	**60**	**5.0**	**1**	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Kobe Hudson	44	580	13.2	4	
Shedrick Jackson	**40**	**527**	**13.2**	**1**	
Demetris Robertson	37	489	13.2	4	
John Samuel Shenker	**33**	**413**	**12.5**	**0**	
Shaun Shivers	22	163	7.4	1	

KICKING: **Anders Carlson, 14-21 FGs, 77 pts.**
TACKLES: Zakoby McClain, 96; Chandler Wooten, 94
SACKS: **Derick Hall, 9.0**
INTERCEPTIONS: Bydarrius Knighten, 2; Roger McCreary, 2

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE TIGERS

Opposing Coaches Size Up Auburn

"Does anyone remember that if the running back doesn't go out of bounds that they beat Alabama? Does anyone remember that they led most of the game? Nobody turns down SEC coaching jobs, but that place is absolutely schizophrenic. … As far as the football, they need a quarterback, they need a much better offensive line, they need to replace a ton of guys in the secondary and receiving corps, and they've bled a lot of Gus Malzahn's guys in the portal because of all the off-field stuff. Is it a lost cause? Maybe not. They're creative on offense. … [Derek] Mason leaving let Bryan Harsin promote another one of his guys up to DC. Not sure if that helps or hurts, but it probably gives him more peace of mind. … They won't settle on a starting quarterback until the very end. That's how he runs it. They'll have a wide-open race all through the summer and keep everyone involved as much as possible; then they'll lock in and try not to swap them once the season starts, unless someone's injured. … You could argue a lot of the wounds they're nursing are self-inflicted by both the head coach and the people around the program. It certainly drove coaches and players out of the program, and it absolutely made it easier to recruit against them. … The upside is that you can't say Hars doesn't understand the league anymore. If he survives this, it will be the greatest trial by fire ever."

OUTSIDE THE HUDDLE

PROMOTING FROM WITHIN When Bryan Harsin arrived at Auburn without any SEC experience, he purposefully added veteran coaches with SEC ties in offensive coordinator Mike Bobo and defensive coordinator Derek Mason. After only one season, both are gone. Harsin dumped Bobo after the offense struggled down the stretch, while Mason bailed for Oklahoma State. Harsin initially went outside the building to hire Seattle Seahawks quarterbacks coach Austin Davis to replace Bobo, but Davis resigned after only a month on the job. Rather than take another chance with someone he didn't know, Harsin doubled down with what he did know and promoted Eric Kiesau to offensive coordinator and Jeff Schmedding to defensive coordinator. Both served in those same roles during Harsin's last year at Boise State but took lesser jobs at Auburn initially, with Kiesau not even in an on-field position until he replaced Cornelius Williams as receivers coach after four games. Deciding to promote two assistants to his top coordinator spots after a 6–7 season is a bold decision by Harsin and one that he desperately needs to pay off.

TANK BIGSBY

Paul Abell

OFFENSIVE SHIFT Tank Bigsby received 223 carries last season, but Auburn shied away from using him at times late in games, instead relying on Bo Nix's passing ability. Auburn struggled mightily trying to close out games late in the season, blowing second-half leads in three consecutive weeks against Mississippi State, South Carolina and Alabama. With Nix gone, Bigsby should be in line for a bigger workload as he becomes the central focus of Auburn's offense. "Our approach moving forward is to set the foundation with the run game," says Kiesau. "I think we got some really talented backs, and we'll start from there." Sophomore running back Jarquez Hunter showed real potential in 2021, rushing for 593 yards and three touchdowns, and he should complement Bigsby effectively in a ground-and-pound offensive shift.

PORTAL BLUES One of the biggest points of criticism aimed at Harsin was how many players entered the transfer portal after one season. Losing Nix, an Auburn legacy, was a big blow, but he was just one of multiple contributors to bail out after a season. Running back Shaun Shivers, receiver Kobe Hudson and defensive linemen J.J. Pegues and Lee Hunter were all noteworthy losses.

RISING STAR

True freshman **CALEB WOODEN** will likely start the season as a backup safety but could be the future of Auburn's secondary. Wooden looked like a breakout performer during his first spring practice, and he has already earned the trust of position coach Zac Etheridge.

2022 AUBURN ROSTER

QUARTERBACKS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
9 Ashford, Robby	6-3/212	Fr.	Hoover, AL
10 Calzada, Zach	6-4/208	So.	Sugar Hill, GA
1 Finley, T.J.	6-7/250	Jr.	Ponchatoula, LA
12 Geriner, Holden	6-3/212	Fr.	Savannah, GA
13 Lindsey, Trey	6-1/200	Jr.	Montgomery, AL
20 Pate, Sawyer	6-1/215	So.	Alabaster, AL

RUNNING BACKS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
4 Bigsby, Tank	6-0/213	Jr.	LaGrange, GA
33 Gordon, Wise	5-9/188	Jr.	Dothan, AL
27 Hunter, Jarquez	5-10/202	So.	Philadelphia, MS
24 Ingram, Jordon	6-1/209	So.	Mobile, AL
44 Jackson, Sean	5-9/230	Fr.	Trussville, AL
35 Jones, Justin	6-1/195	Jr.	Bessemer, AL

RECEIVERS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
28 Billings, Jackson	5-10/182	So.	Huntsville, AL
80 Capers, Ze'Vian	6-4/192	Jr.	Alpharetta, GA
3 Dawson Jr., Tar'Varish	5-10/161	Fr.	Fort Myers, FL
81 Evans, J.J.	6-2/218	So.	Montevallo, AL
5 Fair, Jay	5-10/181	Fr.	Rockwall, TX
11 Jackson, Shedrick	6-2/202	Sr.	Hoover, AL
16 Johnson Jr., Malcolm	6-1/195	Jr.	Bryans Road, MD
6 Johnson, Ja'Varrius	5-10/160	Jr.	Trussville, AL
82 Kruse, Jake	5-10/170	Fr.	Helena, AL
32 Mason, Trent	6-1/187	Jr.	Lakeland, FL
30 Nesmith, Tommy	6-0/180	Jr.	Auburn, AL
83 Stafford, Colby	5-11/176	Fr.	Mobile, AL

TIGHT ENDS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
86 Deal, Luke	6-5/257	Jr.	Greenwood, SC
87 Frazier, Brandon	6-7/262	Jr.	McKinney, TX
85 Fromm, Tyler	6-5/243	Jr.	Warner Robins, GA
40 King, Landen	6-5/220	So.	Beaumont, TX
84 Riley-Ducker, Micah	6-5/258	Fr.	Omaha, NE
25 Shenker, John Samuel	6-4/250	Sr.	Albany, GA

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
64 Bradley, Cort	6-3/293	Fr.	Auburn, AL
52 Brahms, Nick	6-4/300	Sr.	Navarre, FL
55 Coffey, Brenden	6-7/293	Sr.	Paradise, CA
71 Council, Brandon	6-4/328	Sr.	Tar Heel, NC
56 Harris, E.J.	6-5/312	Fr.	Auburn, AL
50 Irvin, Jalil	6-3/313	Sr.	Stone Mountain, GA
65 Jackson, Alec	6-5/321	Sr.	Montgomery, AL
57 Jernigan, Avery	6-4/310	So.	Blackshear, GA
54 Johnson, Tate	6-4/285	Jr.	LaGrange, GA
58 Jones, Keiondre	6-4/340	Jr.	LaGrange, GA
73 Kirkham, Thomas	6-4/293	Fr.	Prattville, AL
74 Langlo, Garner	6-6/300	Fr.	Inverness, FL
69 Smith, Colby	6-8/324	Fr.	Reidsville, NC
62 Stutts, Kameron	6-5/339	Sr.	Killen, AL
68 Troxell, Austin	6-7/309	Sr.	Huntsville, AL
76 Wright, Jeremiah	6-5/335	Jr.	Selma, AL
77 Zierer, Kilian	6-7/312	Sr.	Munich, Germany

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
28 Brice, Hayden	6-3/226	Sr.	Jackson, MS
39 Brooks, Dylan	6-4/232	Fr.	Roanoke, AL
92 Burks, Marquis	6-3/302	Sr.	Chicago, IL
29 Hall, Derick	6-3/256	Sr.	Gulfport, MS
50 Harris, Marcus	6-3/294	Jr.	Montgomery, AL
99 Jones, Jayson	6-6/328	So.	Calera, AL
97 Kelly, Jackson	6-3/262	Fr.	Montgomery, AL
55 Leota, Eku	6-4/257	Sr.	Asheville, NC
95 M'Ba, Jeffrey	6-6/313	So.	Libreville, Gabon
58 Okoli, Tobechi	6-5/261	Fr.	Kansas City, MO
94 Owolabi, Godwin	6-2/300	Fr.	Tuskegee, AL
96 Walker, Garrison	6-1/288	Jr.	Toccoa, GA
3 Walker, Zykeivous	6-4/304	Jr.	Ellaville, GA
91 Ward, Tyler	6-5/220	Fr.	Aspen, CO
25 Wooden, Colby	6-5/284	Jr.	Lawrenceville, GA

LINEBACKERS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
9 Asante, Eugene	6-1/216	Jr.	Alexandria, VA
43 Brown, Kameron	6-0/238	Jr.	Sugar Hill, GA
31 Gordon, Powell	6-2/228	Fr.	Auburn, AL
41 LeGrand, Jonathan	6-1/215	Jr.	Dothan, AL
51 Lester, Barton	6-3/216	Sr.	Montgomery, AL
46 Levant, Jake	6-1/224	So.	Vestavia Hills, AL
0 Pappoe, Owen	6-1/225	Sr.	Lawrenceville, GA
35 Riley, Cam	6-5/230	Jr.	Evergreen, AL
32 Steiner, Wesley	6-0/237	Jr.	Warner Robins, GA
30 Tisdol, Desmond	6-0/234	Jr.	Rochelle, GA
33 Willis, Joko	6-3/212	So.	LaGrange, GA

DEFENSIVE BACKS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
40 Bellew, John Reese	6-1/204	So.	Gadsden, AL
20 Bridges, Cayden	6-2/202	So.	Magee, MS
37 Carpenter, Nate	5-9/165	Fr.	Phenix City, AL
12 Cohen, Sammy	6-1/230	Jr.	Marietta, GA
15 Diamond, A.D.	6-0/161	Fr.	Mobile, AL
27 Gilbert, Marquise	6-2/178	So.	Daytona Beach, FL
24 Hunley Jr., Tony	5-9/171	Jr.	Anniston, AL
10 James, D.J.	6-1/174	Jr.	Mobile, AL
1 Kaufman, Donovan	5-10/205	So.	New Orleans, LA
18 Pritchett, Nehemiah	6-1/182	Sr.	Jackson, AL
11 Puckett, Zion	6-0/227	Jr.	Griffin, GA
5 Rhym, JD	6-1/181	Fr.	Valdosta, GA
36 Simpson, Jaylin	6-1/178	Jr.	Brunswick, GA
21 Wooden, Caleb	6-1/188	Fr.	Lawrenceville, GA

SPECIALISTS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
26 Carlson, Anders (K)	6-5/215	Sr.	Colorado Springs, CO
91 Chapman, Oscar (P)	6-3/202	Jr.	Adelaide, Australia
61 Hughes, Reed (LS)	6-1/231	So.	Conway, AR
93 McGuire, Evan (K)	6-5/223	So.	Alabaster, AL
39 Meyers, Marshall (P)	5-8/205	So.	Opelika, AL
96 Patton, Ben (K)	5-10/203	Jr.	Rochester, MI
67 Quattlebaum, Jacob (LS)	6-1/229	Sr.	Enterprise, AL
42 Vaccarella, Kyle (LS)	6-3/226	Fr.	Fairfield, CT

2022 **SIGNEES**

Auburn signed one of the lowest-ranked recruiting classes in the SEC, a source of considerable frustration and consternation within the program's demanding fan base, which pays plenty of attention to things like that.

Auburn finished with the nation's No. 20 overall class, according to 247Sports rankings, but that was good for only ninth in the SEC, behind programs such as Kentucky and Missouri. Auburn faded down the stretch, not adding a single prospect on the February National Signing Day.

Auburn particularly struggled recruiting the state of Alabama, signing only one of the state's top-10 recruits. By comparison, in-state rival Alabama signed six of the top 10 in-state prospects.

The top in-state recruit Auburn did sign, Robert Woodyard Jr. out of Mobile, is the star of the recruiting class. The 6'1", 210-pounder was ranked the No. 13 linebacker and No. 141 overall prospect in the country. Auburn flipped Woodyard from Alabama, the first time it has swiped a Crimson Tide commit in eight years.

Bryan Harsin and his staff did hit on some needs, but they missed out on fully filling some others.

Four-star quarterback Holden Geriner from Savannah, Ga., is highly regarded and could be the program's future at the position. Defensive lineman Jeffrey M'Ba, originally from Gabon who then lived in France where he was introduced to football before heading to the U.S., was the nation's top-ranked junior college prospect and should make an immediate impact this season.

One potential problem area, especially for the future, is that Auburn signed only one offensive lineman, four-star tackle E.J. Harris from the Tigers' backyard in Auburn, in this year's recruiting class. Auburn also has an immediate need for receiver help, but there isn't a clear-cut option among the recruits who is ready to step in and play right away.

Like many of its SEC counterparts, Auburn might have enjoyed its best recruiting success by tapping into the transfer portal to ameliorate glaring needs. Texas A&M quarterback Zach Calzada, Oregon transfers Jayson Jones (defensive lineman) and D.J. James (cornerback) and North Carolina linebacker Eugene Asante could all start this season for the Tigers.

Auburn also added Oregon transfer quarterback Robby Ashford, really taking advantage of Mario Cristobal trading in Eugene for Coral Gables when he took over the Miami Hurricanes.

BY POSITION

Defensive Backs	6
Defensive Linemen	2
Linebackers	2
Wide Receivers	2
Athletes	1
Offensive Linemen	1
Quarterbacks	1
Running Backs	1
Specialists	1
Tight Ends	1

BY STATE

Alabama	5
Georgia	4
Louisiana	3
Florida	2
California	1
Nebraska	1
Texas	1
Gabon	1

RECRUIT SPOTLIGHT

ALEX MCPHERSON

PK • Fort Payne, AL

If you've watched any college football, you know how exciting and maddening college kickers can be. The inconsistency is part of the sport's charm, although coaches and fans don't always feel that way.

Auburn, though, has been spared from it for years because it tapped into the right kicking family. A Carlson has started as Auburn's kicker since 2014, first Daniel (now with the Oakland Raiders) and then Anders, who has returned for a sixth season. Sadly, Auburn has run out of Carlsons to recruit, but it did find a new kicking family with which to continue its run of good kickers. Alex McPherson, the younger brother of Cincinnati Bengals kicker Evan McPherson, is the future of a position that has been very good to the Tigers over the last decade. The nation's No. 1 kicker recruit has a monster leg — he set an Alabama state record with a 61-yard field goal — that should come in handy for Auburn in the years to come. Alex's coaches in high school had so much faith in his leg they even let him attempt a 70-yard field goal that he barely missed.

"He's got incredible strength in his leg," says former Auburn special teams coordinator Bert Watts. "I'll never forget the first time I watched him kick a football on film and see it absolutely rocket off his foot."

McPherson's kicking pedigree is legit. His oldest brother, Logan, was a kicker and punter at Louisiana Tech. Older brother Evan, who played at Florida, was a revelation his rookie year in the NFL, making all 14 field-goal attempts in the playoffs including two in the Super Bowl. Alex McPherson has a lot to live up to with his last name, but if any program is well-equipped to handle that, it is Auburn.

Name	Pos	Ht/Wt	Hometown	247	ESPN	Rivals	Nat. Rank
Damari Alston	RB	5-10/205	Atlanta, GA	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	340
Austin Ausberry	CB	6-1/195	Baton Rouge, LA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	184
Camden Brown	WR	6-3/190	Monroe, LA	★★★	★★★	★★★★	440
Jay Fair	WR	5-10/181	Rockwall, TX	★★★	★★★★	★★★	593
Holden Geriner	QB	6-3/212	Savannah, GA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	263
Marquise Gilbert	S	6-2/178	Daytona Beach, FL	★★★	★★★	★★★★	6*
Powell Gordon	LB	6-3/228	Auburn, AL	★★★	★★★	★★★	679
E.J. Harris	OT	6-5/312	Auburn, AL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	319
Omari Kelly	ATH	6-1/180	Trussville, AL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	362
Jeffrey M'Ba	DL	6-6/313	Libreville, Gabon	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	1*
Alex McPherson	K	5-10/155	Fort Payne, AL	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,567
JD Rhym	CB	6-1/181	Valdosta, GA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	180
Micah Riley-Ducker	TE	6-5/258	Omaha, NE	★★★	★★★	★★★★	408
Keionte Scott	CB	6-0/185	San Diego, CA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	3*
Enyce Sledge	DL	6-4/315	Monroe, LA	★★★	★★★	★★★	879
Caleb Wooden	S	6-2/185	Lawrenceville, GA	★★★	★★★	★★★	867
Robert Woodyard Jr.	LB	6-1/210	Mobile, AL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	141

*junior college transfer

LSU TIGERS

National Forecast: 26 • SEC West Prediction: 4 • Projected Record: 8-4, 4-4 SEC

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Brian Kelly
RECORD AT SCHOOL: First Season
CAREER RECORD: 284-97-2 (31+ years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mike Denbrock
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Matt House
LOCATION: Baton Rouge, LA
STADIUM: Tiger Stadium (102,321)

KEY TIGERS

KAYSHON BOUTTE, WR Having an All-SEC/All-America-caliber receiver is a huge boost for whoever wins the QB job. Boutte led the team with nine TD catches last year.

MYLES BRENNAN, QB Will Brennan finally get his chance to quarterback the team for an entire season? He'll need to fend off some talented contenders for the job.

BJ OJULARI, LB With a team-leading seven sacks last season, Ojulari is the pass-rushing threat every team needs.

KEY LOSSES

DAMONE CLARK, LB It will likely take at least two Tigers to replace Clark's 135 total tackles, not to mention his leadership.

ELI RICKS, CB The school known for churning out high-caliber defensive backs loses a potential All-American in the back end of the defense, and the loss is compounded by his defection to the Tigers' SEC West rival Alabama.

MAX JOHNSON, QB Johnson's numbers (2,815 passing yards, 27 TDs, 6 INTs) were better than they looked on paper. Now he's at Texas A&M.

THE VERDICT

LSU is the SEC's biggest wild card in 2022. The Tigers return only six starters and used the transfer portal to address immediate needs along the offensive line and in the secondary. Brian Kelly also needs to identify a quarterback from a four-man battle, which had late intrigue with the arrival of Arizona State transfer Jayden Daniels and no clear winner leaving spring. As usual in Baton Rouge, the Tigers won't lack for talent. Kelly has to adapt to the SEC, but if the pieces fall into place, a Top 25 finish is within reach.

POSTSEASON: Las Vegas Bowl vs. Washington

BETTORS' BOX

LSU FUTURES

ODDS TO WIN NATIONAL TITLE: 200/1
ODDS TO WIN SEC: 150/1
ODDS TO WIN SEC WEST: 60/1
SEASON WIN O/U: 6 (Over -130)
HEISMAN CONTENDERS: QB Jayden Daniels (150/1); QB Myles Brennan (200/1); WR Kayshon Boutte (300/1)
BETTORS' BYTE: Since 2017, LSU is 26-14-3 ATS in conference games; their 65 percent success rate is third best in the country during that span.

Information provided by the Bet the Board staff

The question asked from Los Angeles to Long Island about Brian Kelly was this: Why would he leave one of college football's historic programs at Notre Dame to start over at LSU?

Kelly's simple answer: Why wouldn't I be here?

"I wanted to coach the very best players in the country who are afforded the best resources in the country and play in the best conference in the country," Kelly told his new team back on Day 1 in December. "That's an incredible challenge to a football coach. I get that here. I get to work with the best athletic director and the best president, all in alignment to get to the end goal of winning the national championship."

Bold talk, but LSU is a football program in serious need of some bold action. Less than three years removed from a 15–0 season and a national championship, LSU is a meager 11–12 since then. Of more immediate concern is the fact the Tigers were down to about 39 scholarship players for their Texas Bowl loss to Kansas State in January.

Kelly believes that he can get back to 84 scholarship players by August, one off the FBS limit. But simply having to talk about that issue illustrates the obstacles facing Kelly and his new LSU staff as they try to rebuild a championship contender in college football's toughest division.

OFFENSE LSU's quarterback room got so threadbare for the Texas Bowl that receiver Jontre Kirklin, a high school quarterback, was pressed into service behind center. Fast-forward to the start of spring practice in late March, when the Tigers had a full quarterback room again in very 2022 fashion.

There's sixth-year senior Myles Brennan, who hasn't played since early 2020 because of injuries and was talked back from the transfer portal by Kelly. There's former Arizona State starter Jayden Daniels, who transferred in a few weeks before spring practice. And there's redshirt freshman Garrett Nussmeier, who played spot duty in 2021, and a true freshman mid-term enrollee in Walker Howard, son of 1990s LSU quarterback Jamie Howard.

Whoever winds up behind center will have one of the SEC's best receivers to throw to in Kayshon Boutte, though he missed spring practice because of a serious midseason ankle injury. Getting him to return was a coup for Kelly's first team, as was getting senior running back John Emery Jr. eligible after he spent all of 2021 in academic limbo.

The offensive line returns three players who started games last season, led by left tackle Cameron Wire, but is struggling to identify a center. The same is true at tight end, which Kelly labeled a position of concern entering fall practice.

Offensive line coach Brad Davis, who served as LSU's interim coach for the Texas Bowl, was the only holdover from former head coach Ed Orgeron's staff. Kelly also brought back former McNeese head coach Frank Wilson to be his running backs coach, leaning on his recruiting

KAYSHON BOUTTE

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 4	vs. Florida State #
Sept. 10	Southern
Sept. 17	Mississippi State
Sept. 24	New Mexico
Oct. 1	at Auburn
Oct. 8	Tennessee
Oct. 15	at Florida
Oct. 22	Ole Miss
Nov. 5	Alabama
Nov. 12	at Arkansas
Nov. 19	UAB
Nov. 26	at Texas A&M

#New Orleans

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 6-7, 3-5 SEC

Sept. 4	at UCLA	L	27-38
Sept. 11	McNeese State	W	34-7
Sept. 18	Central Michigan	W	49-21
Sept. 25	at Mississippi State	W	28-25
Oct. 2	Auburn	L	19-24
Oct. 9	at Kentucky	L	21-42
Oct. 16	Florida	W	49-42
Oct. 23	at Ole Miss	L	17-31
Nov. 6	at Alabama	L	14-20
Nov. 13	Arkansas	L	13-16
Nov. 20	ULM	W	27-14
Nov. 27	Texas A&M	W	27-24
Jan. 4	vs. Kansas State #	L	20-42

#Texas Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	26.5 ppg	12	80
Rushing	114.0 ypg	13	114
Passing	254.5 ypg	5	45
Total	368.5 ypg	12	91
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	26.6 ppg	11	71
Rushing	140.8 ypg	7	46
Passing	236.8 ypg	11	80
Total	377.5 ypg	10	65
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
-3	-0.23	11	83

Peter Brouillet

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	27.5	99
Defense	29.1	73
Margin	-1.6	89
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	39.6%	102
Defense	42.8%	71
Margin	-3.2%	98
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	5.5	89
Defense	5.6	65
Margin	-0.1	84
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.6	25
Defense	4.5	98
Margin	+0.1	69
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	-3.1	105
Actual	-3	82
Margin	+0.1	64

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

60

LSU's defense was vulnerable to the big play. The Tigers allowed 60 plays of 20-plus yards, ranking 116th in the nation. Opponents averaged 12.9 yards per successful play against the Tigers.

41.7%

The Tigers generated a quality possession on only 41.7 percent of all drives, ranking them 105th among FBS teams.

0.127

The Tigers were able to muster the occasional big play in 2021. LSU's passing offense ranked 42nd in explosiveness, averaging 0.127 EPA/pass and 7.23 yards per dropback.

ties in Louisiana. Kelly also went into his coaching past to reunite with offensive coordinator Mike Denbrock, who spent the previous five seasons at Cincinnati.

DEFENSE Kelly appointed former Kansas City Chiefs linebackers coach Matt House to be his defensive coordinator. The Tigers will go with a three-man front with top pass rusher BJ Ojulari (seven sacks in 2021) playing as a linebacker. The defensive front is stout with the surprising return of end Ali Gaye for his senior season, next to sophomore Maason Smith, a rising star in LSU's defense. Linebackers Micah Baskerville, the Tigers' top returning tackler with 83 stops, and Mike Jones Jr. are also back.

The school that describes itself as "DBU" will have a seriously retooled secondary. Only two players — safeties Jay Ward (69 tackles, two interceptions) and Major Burns — saw significant playing time at LSU last year. Four starters could come by way of the transfer portal: safety and nickel back Joe Foucha and Greg Brooks Jr. from Arkansas, as well as cornerbacks Mekhi Garner from Louisiana and Jarrick Bernard-Converse from Oklahoma State. Watch for sophomore Sage Ryan to push for significant playing time at either nickel or safety.

SPECIALISTS LSU is starting over on special teams, with kicker Cade York turning pro early (yes, you read that right) and punter Avery Atkins graduating. At punter, Kelly will rely on Jay Bramblett, a senior who handled those duties for him at Notre Dame. Bramblett averaged 43.1 yards per punt last season with 19 of his punts downed inside the 20. The placekicking duties will probably fall to the other end of the experience spectrum with freshman Nathan Dibert taking over. The Tigers are also looking for new kick and punt returners.

FINAL ANALYSIS The huge amount of turnover on LSU's roster from last season to this makes the Tigers a hard team to handicap. If LSU can answer its many, many personnel issues, the schedule gives the Tigers a chance to get off to a confidence-building start. LSU opens Labor Day weekend in New Orleans against Florida State, followed by home games against Southern, Mississippi State and New Mexico. If LSU can go to Auburn and pull off a win to somehow get to 5–0, who knows? The Tigers will be outclassed by the likes of Alabama and Texas A&M, but if they can limit the stumbles in their remaining 10 games, a 9–3 record is a reasonable ceiling.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (3)

WR	**1**	**Kayshon Boutte (Jr.)**	**11**	**Brian Thomas Jr. (So.)**
WR	10	Jaray Jenkins (Sr.)	16	Kyren Lacy (Jr.)
WR	**80**	**Jack Bech (So.)**	8	Malik Nabers (So.)
LT	61	Cameron Wire (Sr.)	66	Will Campbell (Fr.)
LG	52	Tre'Mond Shorts (Sr.)	71	Xavier Hill (So.)
C	77	Marlon Martinez (Jr.)	69	Charles Turner (Jr.)
RG	75	Anthony Bradford (Jr.)	58	Kardell Thomas (Jr.)
RT	72	Garrett Dellinger (So.)	70	Miles Frazier (So.)
TE	82	Jack Mashburn (Jr.)	87	Kole Taylor (Jr.)
QB	15	Myles Brennan (Sr.)	5	Jayden Daniels (Jr.)
RB	4	John Emery Jr. (Sr.)		Noah Cain (Jr.)

DEFENSE (3)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	11	Ali Gaye (Sr.)	53	Soni Fonua (Sr.)
NT	99	Jaquelin Roy (Jr.)	90	Jacobian Guillory (So.)
DT	0	Maason Smith (So.)	92	Mekhi Wingo (So.)
LB	**8**	**BJ Ojulari (Jr.)**	39	Phillip Webb (So.)
LB	19	Mike Jones Jr. (Jr.)	30	Greg Penn III (So.)
LB	**23**	**Micah Baskerville (Sr.)**	4	Harold Perkins (Fr.)
CB	22	Mekhi Garner (Jr.)		Sevyn Banks (Sr.)
CB	24	Jarrick Bernard-Converse (Sr.)		Laterrance Welch (Fr.)
NB	12	Greg Brooks Jr. (Sr.)	15	Sage Ryan (So.)
SS	13	Joe Foucha (Sr.)	28	Major Burns (So.)
FS	**5**	**Jay Ward (Sr.)**	6	Derrick Davis Jr. (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	10	Nathan Dibert (Fr.)	**KR**	22	Armoni Goodwin (So.)
P		Jay Bramblett (Sr.)	**PR**	17	Chris Hilton Jr. (So.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Max Johnson	373	225	2,815	27	6
Garrett Nussmeier	**57**	**29**	**329**	**2**	**2**
Jontre Kirklin	11	7	138	3	2
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Tyrion Davis-Price	211	1,003	4.8	6	
Corey Kiner	79	324	4.1	2	
Josh Williams	**23**	**107**	**4.7**	**0**	
Armoni Goodwin	**16**	**65**	**4.1**	**0**	
Jontre Kirklin	11	61	5.5	0	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Jack Bech	**43**	**489**	**11.4**	**3**	
Kayshon Boutte	**38**	**509**	**13.4**	**9**	
Jaray Jenkins	**34**	**502**	**14.8**	**6**	
Trey Palmer	30	344	11.5	3	
Malik Nabers	**28**	**417**	**14.9**	**4**	

KICKING: Cade York, 15-18 FGs, 84 pts.
TACKLES: Damone Clark, 135; **Micah Baskerville, 83**
SACKS: **BJ Ojulari, 7.0**
INTERCEPTIONS: **Jay Ward, 2**

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE TIGERS

Opposing Coaches Size Up LSU

"There's still a good bit of talent on that roster from Ed [Orgeron], and there's no reason they can't put together a nice season right away. Everyone's talking about the culture fit with Brian [Kelly], but that'll all die down when there's actual games to play. … What are they going to do on offense with that personnel? It seems like they want to go dual threat and run with their QB, but that's really just [Jayden] Daniels, not the other guys. They've got some playmakers on the perimeter, and they need to have an effective downfield passing offense with that personnel. I think you might see them rotate QBs, which could be a different set of problems. … Defensively, this will be the weakest secondary LSU has had in decades. It's because of the changeover and losing guys to Arkansas and Alabama, but they're going to feel it. Firing your coach in October creates these issues, right or wrong. … Call this a rebuilding year with urgency. The lines are a mess, especially on offense, and they have as many questions as they do talented players. They'll be really interesting to watch down the stretch this season. It's possible they'll figure it out as they go. … The bigger thing to watch will be recruiting this season and next. Kelly has to prove it here; he's at a top brand that can battle for anyone nationally, but it's not an automatic, and going to war for those five stars against your own division is nothing like Notre Dame."

OUTSIDE THE HUDDLE

CHARGES FILED After years of investigating, the NCAA finally handed down a long list of allegations against LSU's athletic program in March. Eight of them involved the men's basketball program and its former head coach Will Wade, who was swiftly fired. But three allegations were also directed at football. A further complication for LSU is that the NCAA connected the two cases and has accused the school of a lack of institutional control. The most serious football allegation is a Level I violation that a booster gave $180,000 to the father of former offensive lineman Vadal Alexander for a do-nothing job. There is also a Level II charge of former wide receiver Odell Beckham Jr. passing out cash to players after the CFP National Championship Game against Clemson in January 2020 and a Level III violation of minor impermissible recruiting contact by former coach Ed Orgeron. The Tigers had already penalized themselves with a bowl ban in 2020 along with scholarship and recruiting limitations, hoping that its proactive moves would help mitigate and future sanctions.

BJ OJULARI

Peter Brouillet

SWAT TEAM To help with his rebuild, Kelly brought in the SWAT team. It's not as bad as it sounds. In Kelly's system, "SWAT" stands for Spring/Summer Workout Accountability Team. Kelly picked 10 SWAT leaders, including quarterback Myles Brennan, defensive lineman Ali Gaye and outside linebacker BJ Ojulari, who then drafted groups of players. The groups then receive points through a variety of competitions, with the goal of creating positive habits. The key letter in the SWAT acronym to Brennan is "A" for accountability. It's Kelly's watchword, he says. Teams can lose points for showing up late for workouts, missing appointments or not swiping their access cards at LSU's athletic nutrition center, where each player has a personalized meal plan. "This whole thing's about being accountable and doing your job," Brennan says. "If everyone does their job, we'll be just fine."

RISING STAR

Defensive tackle **MAASON SMITH** had 19 tackles and four sacks in 2021, impressive numbers for a young interior lineman. This year he will be counted on to anchor the middle and form a menacing pass-rushing combo with outside linebacker BJ Ojulari.

2022 LSU ROSTER

	QUARTERBACKS	**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
15	Brennan, Myles	6-4/235	Sr.	Long Beach, MS
5	Daniels, Jayden	6-3/185	Jr.	San Bernardino, CA
12	Faulk, Tavion	5-11/184	Fr.	Carencro, LA
14	Howard, Walker	6-0/190	Fr.	Lafayette, LA
13	Nussmeier, Garrett	6-2/190	Fr.	Lake Charles, LA
19	O'Dowd, Matt	6-1/200	Fr.	Plantation, FL
	RUNNING BACKS	**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
26	Bradford, Tre	6-0/210	Jr.	Dallas, TX
	Cain, Noah	5-10/220	Jr.	Baton Rouge, LA
35	Demas, Nick	6-0/202	So.	Westfield, IN
4	Emery Jr., John	5-11/220	Sr.	St. Rose, LA
22	Goodwin, Armoni	5-8/198	So.	Birmingham, AL
21	Kiner, Corey	5-9/217	So.	Cincinnati, OH
23	Norman, Corren	5-9/200	Jr.	Lafayette, LA
27	Williams, Josh	5-9/208	Jr.	Houston, TX
	RECEIVERS	**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
80	Bech, Jack	6-2/215	So.	Lafayette, LA
1	Boutte, Kayshon	6-0/205	Jr.	New Iberia, LA
88	Francioni, Evan	6-0/203	Sr.	River Ridge, LA
24	Gibson, Eric	6-1/201	Fr.	Norfolk, VA
85	Gilyot, LJ	5-9/165	Jr.	New Orleans, LA
17	Hilton Jr., Chris	6-1/185	So.	Zachary, LA
10	Jenkins, Jaray	6-2/205	Sr.	Jena, LA
16	Lacy, Kyren	6-2/215	Jr.	Thibodaux, LA
8	Nabers, Malik	6-1/190	So.	Youngsville, LA
84	Nash, Noah	5-10/172	Fr.	Baton Rouge, LA
89	Rilling, Jack	5-8/178	Fr.	Madison, WI
11	Thomas Jr., Brian	6-3/205	So.	Walker, LA
81	Thompkins, Shamar	5-10/179	Sr.	Charlotte, NC
	TIGHT ENDS	**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
86	Bonine, Caleb	6-3/214	So.	Baton Rouge, LA
46	Drost, Charlie	6-5/240	So.	Lake Charles, LA
45	King, Stephen	6-6/260	Sr.	Alexandria, VA
51	Laforge, Luke	6-0/205	Fr.	New Orleans, LA
83	Leonards, Gabe	6-2/217	Fr.	Crowley, LA
82	Mashburn, Jack	6-3/235	Jr.	Mandeville, LA
48	Storz, Nick	6-6/260	Sr.	Brooklyn, NY
87	Taylor, Kole	6-7/247	Jr.	Grand Junction, CO
	OFFENSIVE LINEMEN	**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
53	Balestra, Brian	6-4/311	Fr.	New Orleans, LA
64	Billedeaux, Josh	6-0/325	Fr.	Lafayette, LA
75	Bradford, Anthony	6-5/365	Jr.	Muskegon, MI
66	Campbell, Will	6-6/310	Fr.	Monroe, LA
72	Dellinger, Garrett	6-5/317	So.	Clarkston, MI
74	Dumervil, Marcus	6-5/293	So.	Lauderdale Lakes, FL
70	Frazier, Miles	6-5/325	So.	Camden, NJ
71	Hill, Xavier	6-4/315	So.	Olive Branch, MS
55	Makane'ole, Kimo	6-3/295	Fr.	Niceville, FL
77	Martinez, Marlon	6-4/330	Jr.	Fort Lauderdale, FL
67	Payne, Spencer	6-2/296	So.	Castroville, TX
78	Perry, Thomas	6-6/325	Jr.	Lafayette, LA
52	Shorts, Tre'Mond	6-5/230	Sr.	Hampton, GA
63	Smith, Lanson	6-0/298	Fr.	Houston, TX
58	Thomas, Kardell	6-4/345	Jr.	Baton Rouge, LA
69	Turner, Charles	6-4/285	Jr.	Canton, OH
65	Walker, Ethan	6-4/260	Fr.	Wilmington, DE
68	West Jr., Fitzgerald	6-2/325	Fr.	Lafayette, LA
61	Wire, Cameron	6-6/307	Sr.	Gonzales, LA
	DEFENSIVE LINEMEN	**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
42	Blue, Lane	6-1/248	Fr.	Chatham, LA
17	Carter, Zavier	6-3/210	So.	Atlanta, GA
55	Cherry, Jarell	6-2/259	Sr.	Dallas, TX
53	Fonua, Soni	6-3/280	Sr.	Salt Lake City, UT
11	Gaye, Ali	6-6/268	Sr.	Lynnwood, WA
90	Guillory, Jacobian	6-1/335	So.	Alexandria, LA
91	Jackson, Braxton	6-2/330	Jr.	Shreveport, LA
35	Jones, Saivion	6-5/255	So.	Vacherie, LA
81	Langston, Bryce	6-3/290	Fr.	Ocala, FL
59	Little, Desmond	6-5/231	Jr.	Prichard, AL
94	Malbrue, Princeton	6-1/224	Fr.	Carencro, LA
57	Peterson, GiVanni	6-4/230	Fr.	Highlands Ranch, CO
56	Richardson, Deshaun	6-2/292	Fr.	Baton Rouge, LA
99	Roy, Jaquelin	6-3/315	Jr.	Baton Rouge, LA
0	Smith, Maason	6-5/298	So.	Houma, LA
93	Wiggins, Quency	6-5/280	Fr.	Napoleonville, LA
92	Wingo, Mekhi	6-0/292	So.	St. Louis, MO
	LINEBACKERS	**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
23	Baskerville, Micah	6-1/228	Sr.	Shreveport, LA
37	Faust, Hunter	6-1/226	Sr.	New Orleans, LA
25	Fields, Kolbe	6-0/218	Fr.	New Orleans, LA
43	Jayne, Matt	5-8/195	So.	Kenner, LA
19	Jones Jr., Mike	6-0/232	Jr.	Nashville, TN
46	McLaughlin, Blake	5-10/229	Fr.	New Orleans, LA
8	Ojulari, BJ	6-3/245	Jr.	Marietta, GA
30	Penn III, Greg	6-1/237	So.	Baltimore, MD
41	Rodriguez, Kyler	5-10/200	So.	Kenner, LA
34	Sampah, Antoine	6-2/215	Jr.	Woodbridge, VA
58	Small, Jared	5-10/207	Sr.	Baton Rouge, LA
32	Tolan, DeMario	6-1/215	Fr.	Orlando, FL
39	Webb, Phillip	6-4/255	So.	Buford, GA
33	Weeks, West	6-3/230	So.	Watkinsville, GA
48	Wright, Sloan	6-1/233	So.	Lafayette, LA
	DEFENSIVE BACKS	**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
47	Abraham II, Aristotle	5-10/182	Fr.	Mansfield, TX
	Banks, Sevyn	6-1/200	Sr.	Orlando, FL
24	Bernard-Converse, Jarrick	6-1/205	Sr.	Shreveport, LA
12	Brooks Jr., Greg	5-9/185	Sr.	Harvey, LA
36	Brown, Dylan	6-0/185	Fr.	Katy, TX
28	Burns, Major	6-2/190	So.	Baton Rouge, LA
6	Davis Jr., Derrick	6-0/208	So.	Pittsburgh, PA
13	Foucha, Joe	5-10/210	Sr.	New Orleans, LA
31	Garard, Everett	5-9/185	Fr.	Atlanta, GA
22	Garner, Mekhi	6-2/215	Jr.	Mesquite, TX
4	Harris Jr., Todd	5-11/195	Sr.	Maringouin, LA
40	Hedgemon, Kai	6-5/197	Jr.	Jacksonville, FL
29	Jones, Raydarious	6-2/175	Jr.	Horn Lake, MS
14	Langlois, Matthew	6-0/202	So.	New Roads, LA
26	McGhee, Damarius	6-0/165	So.	Pensacola, FL
15	Ryan, Sage	5-11/203	So.	Lafayette, LA
21	Toles, Jordan	6-1/205	Jr.	Baltimore, MD
27	Walker, Ralph	5-9/170	Fr.	Zachary, LA
5	Ward, Jay	6-1/188	Sr.	Moultrie, GA
45	Willis, RJ	5-11/180	Fr.	Riverside, CA
16	Wilson, Quad	5-8/164	So.	New Orleans, LA
	SPECIALISTS	**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
	Bramblett, Jay (P)	6-2/175	Sr.	Tuscaloosa, AL
49	Ferguson, Jonathan (LS)	6-2/238	Fr.	Sacramento, CA
39	Mata, Ezekeal (K)	5-11/195	So.	San Marcos, CA
47	Peterson, Max (LS)	6-0/220	So.	Weston, MA
34	Ramos, Damian (K)	6-2/177	Fr.	Baltimore, MD
44	Roy, Slade (LS)	6-2/220	So.	Charlotte, NC
38	Todd, Peyton (P)	6-5/240	Fr.	West Monroe, LA

2022 **SIGNEES**

How did LSU do in the Tigers' first recruiting cycle under new head coach Brian Kelly? It depends on how you look at it.

Based strictly on high school signees, the transition from Ed Orgeron to Kelly knocked the Tigers out of their usual top-10 perch. A year after Orgeron's last class of Tiger recruits was ranked No. 3 in the nation behind only Alabama and Ohio State, LSU wound up No. 12 nationally and fourth in the SEC behind Texas A&M, Alabama and Georgia, according to the 247Sports Composite ranking, with a relatively small class of 15 signees. Orgeron even rubbed a little salt in the wound in an interview with Jacksonville, Fla., radio station 92.5-FM: "It's LSU. You should get the top players here."

But when you combine the players LSU got out of high school with the Tigers' extensive work in the transfer portal, LSU climbed to No. 6 overall nationally with 29 total players as of early May.

On the recruiting side, the biggest flip to the Tigers was the February signing of five-star linebacker Harold Perkins out of Cypress, Texas. Perkins held off signing with Texas A&M and decommitted from the Aggies in January. He also visited Florida before choosing the Tigers.

LSU took some lumps in state with the coaching change, signing only three of Louisiana's top-10 players on the 247Sports list. But the players LSU did land filled big-time needs, starting with offensive tackle Will Campbell of Monroe Neville. Right behind him was Lafayette St. Thomas More quarterback Walker Howard, whose final recruiting ranking was impacted by a leg injury he suffered during his senior season. The Tigers also got highly regarded defensive lineman Quency Wiggins to stay at home in Baton Rouge.

Kelly and his staff used the transfer portal to fill in gaps everywhere from quarterback to cornerback to long snapper.

LSU made a surprising acquisition in March when Arizona State starting quarterback Jayden Daniels transferred in. Daniels, who will compete for the starting job, tops a list of Power 5 transfers that included former Oklahoma State cornerback Jarrick Bernard-Converse, ex-South Carolina linebacker Kolbe Fields and former Missouri defensive tackle Mekhi Wingo.

The Tigers bolstered their secondary with two more transfers from SEC West rival Arkansas — cornerback Greg Brooks Jr. and safety Joe Foucha, two New Orleans-area players who returned home to play in state. They also landed former Ohio State corner Sevyn Banks. Punter Jay Bramblett also followed Kelly from Notre Dame and was expected to take over the job.

Penn State transfer running back Noah Cain and former FIU offensive tackle Miles Frazier were expected to immediately vie for significant playing time with the Tigers.

BY POSITION

Defensive Backs	3
Defensive Linemen	3
Offensive Linemen	3
Linebackers	2
Quarterbacks	1
Specialists	1
Tight Ends	1
Wide Receivers	1

BY STATE

Louisiana	10
Florida	2
Texas	2
Michigan	1

RECRUIT SPOTLIGHT

WALKER HOWARD

QB • Lafayette, La.

It seemed Walker Howard, one of the nation's most highly sought quarterback prospects, could wind up nowhere else but LSU. After all, his father, Jamie, played quarterback for the Tigers in the 1990s. And LSU is where Jamie Howard and Walker's late mother Kathryn, who died in September 2018, met and fell in love.

But after Ed Orgeron's firing midway through the 2021 season, Howard started to have doubts. He was recruited heavily by Florida and its new head coach, former Louisiana coach Billy Napier, with whom Howard had developed a relationship playing for St. Thomas More in Lafayette. Notre Dame recruited Howard as well.

"He wasn't sleeping for a couple of nights there," Jamie Howard says.

In the end, both Walker Howard and the coach who tried to pull him to Notre Dame, Brian Kelly, wound up at LSU. Kelly visited Howard between his Dec. 1 introduction as LSU's coach and the early signing period. He convinced Howard that LSU was still the place for him.

"I'm your guy," Howard said.

Howard (6'0", 190) was the No. 1 quarterback prospect in the country in 2021 after throwing for 3,430 yards and 42 touchdowns as a junior and leading St. Thomas More to a state title. However, a broken fibula cut short his senior season. He signed with LSU as the No. 5 quarterback for 2022 and enrolled in January, the highest-ranked QB LSU signed in more than a decade.

LSU went from a converted wide receiver playing quarterback in January's Texas Bowl to a crowded quarterback meeting room after Howard's arrival and the transfer in from former Arizona State quarterback Jayden Daniels.

The competition will be fierce this year, but Howard is LSU's long-term insurance policy for the quarterback position.

Name	Pos	Ht/Wt	Hometown	247	ESPN	Rivals	Nat. Rank
Jordan Allen	S	5-10/184	Lafayette, LA	★★★	★★★★	★★★	432
Bo Bordelon	OT	6-5/269	Raceland, LA	★★★	★★★	★★★	711
Will Campbell	OT	6-6/310	Monroe, LA	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	36
Jaelyn Davis-Robinson	CB	5-11/175	Waxahachie, TX	★★★	★★★	★★★★	483
Nathan Dibert	K	5-11/195	Hartland, MI	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,787
Tygee Hill	DL	6-3/283	New Orleans, LA	★★★	★★★★	★★★	532
Walker Howard	QB	6-0/190	Lafayette, LA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	41
Landon Ibieta	WR	5-11/175	Mandeville, LA	★★★	★★★	★★★★	448
Emery Jones	OL	6-4/330	Baton Rouge, LA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	110
Harold Perkins	LB	6-2/210	Cypress, TX	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	8
Mason Taylor	TE	6-5/225	Plantation, FL	★★★	★★★	★★★★	485
DeMario Tolan	LB	6-1/215	Orlando, FL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	200
Laterrance Welch	CB	6-1/178	Lafayette, LA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	127
Fitzgerald West Jr.	DL	6-2/325	Lafayette, LA	★★★	★★★	★★★	999
Quency Wiggins	DL	6-5/280	Napoleonville, LA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	76

MISSISSIPPI STATE BULLDOGS

National Forecast: 30 • SEC West Prediction: 6 • Projected Record: 7-5, 3-5 SEC

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Mike Leach
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 11-13 (2 years)
CAREER RECORD: 150-103 (20 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mike Leach
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Zach Arnett
LOCATION: Starkville, MS
STADIUM: Davis Wade Stadium (61,337)

KEY BULLDOGS

EMMANUEL FORBES, CB In a secondary that has a question or two, Forbes provides stability as one of the SEC's top defensive backs.

WILL ROGERS, QB Took a tremendous leap in 2021 and should be even more comfortable now in his third year running the Air Raid offense.

LAQUINSTON SHARP, C On an offensive line replacing both tackles, Sharp provides consistency and leadership up front at the center position.

KEY LOSSES

CHARLES CROSS, LT One of the top offensive linemen in Mississippi State history, the man who has been the protector of Rogers' blind side will certainly be missed.

MARTIN EMERSON, CB Statistics rarely displayed how good Emerson was for Mississippi State since opponents largely avoided him.

MAKAI POLK, WR MSU's top pass-catcher a year ago, Polk set new school records in both receptions and receiving yards in his lone year as a Bulldog.

THE VERDICT

Quarterback Will Rogers headlines a high-powered offense and a team that leads the SEC with 16 returning starters, but progress in the win column could be tough for Mike Leach's team in 2022. The Bulldogs face one of the nation's most difficult schedules this fall, including road trips in conference play to LSU, Alabama and Ole Miss. Mississippi State also draws a tough crossover with the East, facing Georgia in Starkville and Kentucky on the road. An offensive line losing both tackles is another concern, while the defense has room to improve after allowing 5.8 yards per play in SEC games.

POSTSEASON: Birmingham Bowl vs. Maryland

BETTORS' BOX

MISSISSIPPI STATE FUTURES

ODDS TO WIN NATIONAL TITLE: 175/1
ODDS TO WIN SEC: 125/1
ODDS TO WIN SEC WEST: 50/1
SEASON WIN O/U: 6.5 (Over -150)
HEISMAN CONTENDER: QB Will Rogers (125/1)
BETTORS' BYTE: The Bulldogs are 18-2 ATS in the last 20 games that they've played facing a rest disadvantage.

Information provided by the Bet the Board staff

There's just no substitute for experience.

As Mississippi State gets set for its third year under head coach Mike Leach, the Bulldogs will enter the season with a solid, veteran foundation. MSU has eight returning starters on each side of the football, all vital pieces of a team that ended the 2021 regular season ranked in the top 30 nationally in both total offense and total defense. Suddenly, a group that only a couple years ago was one of the country's youngest teams seems all grown up. That's the good news for Mississippi State.

Now here's the bad. MSU has to run through a schedule that's as tough or tougher as any team's slate in the country. So just how much will State's experience pay off and show up in the win column? That's the big question.

On one hand, an older group might be just what Mississippi State needs to weather all the storms it'll face. On the other, when you face the gauntlet MSU is looking at, simply having been through the wars before might not be enough.

OFFENSE Quarterback Will Rogers leads a Mississippi State offense that is now at the point where, for most players, just about all they have known in college is Leach's Air Raid. Of course, Rogers is the centerpiece of the pass-happy system and showed last season how much of a weapon he could be. After being thrust into the starting role as a true freshman in 2020, Rogers enjoyed a tremendous sophomore year in which he began rewriting the MSU record book. Last year, Rogers set the single-season school record for completions (505), passing yardage (4,739) and touchdowns (36). He set numerous single-game records as well and enters 2022 as MSU's leader in career completion percentage. Rogers has seemingly progressed in each game the last two seasons, and he hasn't been alone in getting comfortable.

Both of Mississippi State's primary running backs — Jo'quavious Marks and Dillon Johnson — have seen a ton of action. Only two years into his career, Marks already holds the State career record for receptions by a running back. Johnson has been nearly as productive. The duo has accounted for 2,787 total yards the last two seasons.

MSU also brings back a wealth of talent at the inside receiver positions. Austin Williams is headed into his sixth year with the program and is a leader on and off the field. Jaden Walley is another standout returnee in the slot. He followed up a Freshman All-SEC season in 2020 with 628 yards and six touchdowns in 2021.

State's biggest offensive questions come on the outside, both at the receiving position and on the offensive line.

Makai Polk starred as a pass-catcher in his lone year at MSU before declaring for the 2022 NFL Draft. Polk led State with a school-record 105 receptions and 1,046 receiving yards. The Bulldogs will need to find someone to make up for that lost production, as well as find a pair of offensive tackles. Last year's left tackle, Charles Cross, entered the NFL Draft as a coveted prospect, while last season was right tackle Scott Lashley's final year of eligibility.

EMMANUEL FORBES

Tom DiPace

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Memphis
Sept. 10	at Arizona
Sept. 17	at LSU
Sept. 24	Bowling Green
Oct. 1	Texas A&M
Oct. 8	Arkansas
Oct. 15	at Kentucky
Oct. 22	at Alabama
Nov. 5	Auburn
Nov. 12	Georgia
Nov. 19	East Tennessee State
Nov. 24	at Ole Miss

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 7-6, 4-4 SEC

Sept. 4	Louisiana Tech	W	35-34
Sept. 11	NC State	W	24-10
Sept. 18	at Memphis	L	29-31
Sept. 25	LSU	L	25-28
Oct. 2	at Texas A&M	W	26-22
Oct. 16	Alabama	L	9-49
Oct. 23	at Vanderbilt	W	45-6
Oct. 30	Kentucky	W	31-17
Nov. 6	at Arkansas	L	28-31
Nov. 13	at Auburn	W	43-34
Nov. 20	Tennessee State	W	55-10
Nov. 25	Ole Miss	L	21-31
Dec. 28	vs. Texas Tech #	L	7-34

#Liberty Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	29.1 ppg	9	59
Rushing	63.2 ypg	14	130
Passing	378.3 ypg	1	4
Total	441.5 ypg	7	29

DEFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	25.9 ppg	9	63
Rushing	113.0 ypg	3	12
Passing	231.8 ypg	10	71
Total	344.8 ypg	5	30

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
-2	-0.15	10	80

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	29.4	55
Defense	29.2	77
Margin	+0.2	62
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	50.2%	8
Defense	39.5%	38
Margin	+10.7%	5
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	6.0	64
Defense	5.7	73
Margin	+0.3	67
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.2	67
Defense	4.2	68
Margin	+0.0	78
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	-1.2	86
Actual	-2	78
Margin	-0.8	75

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

46.4%

Mississippi State was the highest-volume passing team in the nation, passing 26.7 percent more than the average team. Even with the high volume, the Bulldogs were seventh in passing efficiency, averaging a 46.4 percent success rate.

0.075

Mississippi State ranked 66th in limiting passing explosiveness on defense, allowing 0.075 EPA/pass and 7.0 yards per dropback.

55.4%

Mississippi State avoided third downs 55.4 percent of the time, fifth best overall, and averaged 0.112 EPA/play on early downs (20th in FBS).

DEFENSE The first two levels of the Mississippi State defense stand as the units with the strongest track record on that side of the football.

MSU brings back its entire starting defensive line and should add back into the mix a skilled pass rusher in the form of Jordan Davis. Davis missed last year with a knee injury.

The Bulldogs are also solid at linebacker, as Jett Johnson, Nathaniel Watson and Tyrus Wheat all return to go along with talented depth behind them.

It's in the secondary where MSU has most of its unknowns. The Bulldogs will have to figure out whom they'll plug into various openings in the defensive backfield.

Martin Emerson was one of the SEC's best corners over the last couple of years, but he left early to enter the NFL Draft. Safety Fred Peters is also no longer in maroon and white.

The Bulldogs have options in the defensive backfield, including the blossoming Decamerion Richardson and Alabama transfer Marcus Banks at corner. But there's no doubt the secondary stands as State's biggest defensive concern.

SPECIALISTS Former Air Force walk-on Archer Trafford assumed punting duties early in the year and did a solid job, punting 26 times and averaging 42.4 yards per punt with a long of 57 yards.

MSU will definitely have a new placekicker, however. Both Brandon Ruiz and Nolan McCord are no longer Bulldogs. Coastal Carolina transfer Massimo Biscardi, who's made 46 of his 57 career field goals including 18 out of 21 the last two seasons, is in the running for the job, as is Northern Colorado transfer Ben Raybon, who was 8-for-14 on field-goal tries in 2021.

FINAL ANALYSIS For Mississippi State, 2022 likely comes down to the team's level of consistency.

At their best, the Bulldogs proved last year they could hang with anyone, as they earned huge victories and went into the regular season's final week with a chance to finish second in the ultra-competitive SEC West.

At other times, the Bulldogs' Air Raid offense was unable to take flight, and MSU seemed like a different team altogether as a result.

State has the playmakers to make noise in 2022. The Bulldogs simply need those pieces to use their experience to perform with more consistency than they did during an up-and-down 2021.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)

WR	5	Lideatrick Griffin (Jr.)	0	Rara Thomas (So.)
WR	**85**	**Austin Williams (Sr.)**	24	Scoobie Ford (Sr.)
WR	**11**	**Jaden Walley (Jr.)**	6	Jamire Calvin (Sr.)
WR	17	Caleb Ducking (Sr.)	81	Antonio Harmon (Fr.)
LT	75	Percy Lewis (Jr.)	52	Grant Jackson (So.)
LG	**58**	**Kameron Jones (Sr.)**	66	Nick Jones (Jr.)
C	**63**	**LaQuinston Sharp (Sr.)**	51	Reed Buys (Jr.)
RG	**57**	**Cole Smith (Sr.)**	**69**	**Kwatrivous Johnson (Sr.)**
RT	76	Albert Reese IV (Fr.)	64	Steven Losoya III (Jr.)
QB	**2**	**Will Rogers (Jr.)**	12	Sawyer Robertson (Fr.)
RB	**7**	**Jo'quavious Marks (Jr.)**	23	Dillon Johnson (Jr.)

DEFENSE (8) Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	6	Jordan Davis (Sr.)	9	De'Monte Russell (Jr.)
DT	**93**	**Cameron Young (Sr.)**	22	Nathan Pickering (Sr.)
DE	**94**	**Jaden Crumedy (Sr.)**	**5**	**Randy Charlton (Sr.)**
SLB	**2**	**Tyrus Wheat (Sr.)**	45	Ty Cooper (So.)
MLB	**14**	**Nathaniel Watson (Sr.)**	40	Nic Mitchell (Fr.)
WLB	44	Jett Johnson (Sr.)	16	DeShawn Page (Jr.)
CB	3	Decamerion Richardson (Jr.)	1	Marcus Banks (Sr.)
CB	**13**	**Emmanuel Forbes (Jr.)**	4	DeCarlos Nicholson (Jr.)
BULL	12	Shawn Preston Jr. (Sr.)	10	Corey Ellington (So.)
SS	**0**	**Jalen Green (Sr.)**	24	Dylan Lawrence (Jr.)
FS	**19**	**Collin Duncan (Sr.)**	7	Jackie Matthews (Sr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	29	Massimo Biscardi (Sr.)	KR	5	Lideatrick Griffin (Jr.)
P	56	Archer Trafford (Sr.)	PR	85	Austin Williams (Sr.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Will Rogers	**683**	**505**	**4,739**	**36**	**9**
Chance Lovertich	**18**	**13**	**179**	**1**	**0**
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Dillon Johnson	**89**	**485**	**5.4**	**4**	
Jo'quavious Marks	**106**	**416**	**3.9**	**6**	
J.J. Jernighan	**6**	**24**	**4.0**	**0**	
Chance Lovertich	**3**	**10**	**3.3**	**0**	
Will Rogers	**62**	**-97**	**-1.6**	**0**	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Makai Polk	105	1,046	10.0	9	
Jo'quavious Marks	**83**	**502**	**6.0**	**3**	
Dillon Johnson	**65**	**422**	**6.5**	**1**	
Jaden Walley	**55**	**628**	**11.4**	**6**	
Austin Williams	**52**	**617**	**11.9**	**4**	

KICKING: Nolan McCord, 9-16 FGs, 50 pts.
TACKLES: **Jett Johnson, 86; Nathaniel Watson, 84**
SACKS: **Tyrus Wheat, 7.5**
INTERCEPTIONS: **Emmanuel Forbes, 3**

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE BULLDOGS

Opposing Coaches Size Up Mississippi State

"The good news is that they have the quarterback [Will Rogers] back, and he does a lot of what Mike Leach likes. Historically, that means his numbers will jump, he'll make better decisions and have less turnovers and they'll be a more consistent scoring offense. They lose the really good tackle [Charles Cross]; that hurts. … It helps that some of those receivers are back, too, but they don't have a threat you have to work around. What would really help them is having the one dynamic guy you have to cheat to double. That's when they can kill you. … The interesting story for these guys is on defense. [DC Zach] Arnett is a rising star and a really sharp mind, and that defensive staff has some really sharp guys. But part of what makes him good is that he knows when to dial it up and take a risk, and when you're aggressive on defense opposite a Leach offense, it can be a disaster sometimes. … The question shouldn't be if Mike can coach in the SEC. That's stupid; he can. The question is how can they advance what they're doing? That's the same for every offensive coach in this league. Right now, if you've got a disciplined secondary with good eyes who can play zone, you can slow them down. The feeling around the league right now is that everyone knows what they're going to do. That doesn't mean you can always stop them, but it's not good either. This is the SEC; we've all got analysts eating tape. You have to stay fresh."

OUTSIDE THE HUDDLE

STAFF SHAKEUP The names remain familiar on the Mississippi State coaching staff, but some of the roles have changed, all with the goal of keeping things fresh, says head coach Mike Leach. Formerly the running backs coach, Eric Mele is now MSU's special teams coordinator. It's a role Mele previously held under Leach at Washington State. Former safeties coach Jason Washington has swapped sides of the football and has taken over Mele's old spot coaching the Bulldog running backs. Drew Hollingshead is now coaching State's inside receivers after spending the last few years as an offensive assistant under Leach. Other coaching changes include defensive coordinator Zach Arnett now taking on responsibilities for the safeties after previously coaching inside linebackers. Matt Brock goes from coaching special teams and outside linebackers to guiding the entire linebacking corps.

BOWLING BULLDOGS When it comes to playing postseason football, Mississippi State finds itself in rare company these days. Last season's Liberty Bowl appearance marked the 12th straight year in which the Bulldogs have earned a bowl game. The 2009 campaign was the last time MSU failed to play beyond the regular season. Mississippi State is one of only eight schools in the country to have earned a bowl game in each of the last 12 years.

WILL ROGERS

Tom DiPace

WILL POWER In only two seasons, Will Rogers has done things no other Mississippi State quarterback has done before. In 2021, Rogers set multiple MSU records, including single-season highs for completions, passing yardage and passing touchdowns and single-game records for completions and passing touchdowns. For his career, Rogers already owns the most 300-plus-yard passing games in Bulldog history and enters 2022 as the school's all-time leader in completion percentage. He already stands second in school history in career passing yardage and third in career touchdown passes with three years of eligibility still remaining.

BUCKLE UP SEC teams are used to grueling schedules, but Mississippi State's is about as tough as they come in 2022. Per 247Sports, MSU's upcoming slate is the most difficult in the country. As always, the Bulldogs will face perennial power Alabama and other SEC West foes. But in addition, MSU hosts defending national champion Georgia and takes on a tough Kentucky team in this year's two league crossover games.

ALL GROWN UP The success of the MSU offense a year ago was built upon the backs of youngsters who are now a year older and perhaps ready to take the next steps in their development. The Bulldogs scored 48 touchdowns in 2021. When you account for the fact that quarterback Rogers threw for 36 of them, freshmen and sophomores had a hand in things on all 48 Mississippi State touchdowns.

RISING STAR

Junior college transfer **PERCY LEWIS** seems likely to step into standout Charles Cross' old role as State's starting left tackle — obviously a vital piece of the Air Raid offense. Lewis arrived at MSU as the nation's fifth-ranked junior college recruit per 247Sports.

2022 MISSISSIPPI STATE ROSTER

	QUARTERBACKS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
3	Greek, Daniel	6-4/225	Fr.	Argyle, TX
	Locke, Braedyn	6-1/195	Fr.	Rockwall, TX
9	Lovertich, Chance	5-11/190	Sr.	Brandon, MS
12	Robertson, Sawyer	6-4/210	Fr.	Lubbock, TX
2	Rogers, Will	6-2/210	Jr.	Brandon, MS
15	Weir, Jake	6-2/205	Fr.	Tupelo, MS

	RUNNING BACKS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
21	Hargrove, Ke'Travion	5-11/195	Fr.	Ruston, LA
32	Jernighan, J.J.	5-11/215	Sr.	Amory, MS
23	Johnson, Dillon	6-0/215	Jr.	Greenville, MS
7	Marks, Jo'quavious	5-10/205	Jr.	Atlanta, GA
33	Price, Simeon	6-0/215	Fr.	Pensacola, FL

	RECEIVERS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
49	Berquist, Andrew	6-4/215	Fr.	Ponte Vedra Beach, FL
87	Brooks, Bo	6-1/185	Sr.	Madison, MS
6	Calvin, Jamire	5-10/160	Sr.	Pasadena, CA
25	Cumbest, Brad	6-5/240	Sr.	Hurley, MS
17	Ducking, Caleb	6-5/205	Sr.	Rolling Fork, MS
24	Ford, Christian	5-11/175	Sr.	Atlanta, GA
5	Griffin, Lideatrick	5-10/180	Jr.	Philadelphia, MS
81	Harmon, Antonio	6-3/210	Fr.	Kosciusko, MS
82	Harvey, Rufus	5-10/170	So.	Starkville, MS
	Hopson, Jarnorris	5-11/175	Fr.	Tunica, MS
89	King, Brodie	5-10/190	Sr.	Biloxi, MS
80	Kolka, Kade	5-11/187	Fr.	Tallahassee, FL
	Mosley, Jordan	6-0/190	Fr.	Mobile, AL
	Robinson, Justin	6-4/220	So.	McDonough, GA
0	Thomas, Rara	6-2/200	So.	Eufaula, AL
11	Walley, Jaden	6-0/185	Jr.	D'Iberville, MS
85	Williams, Austin	6-3/200	Sr.	Ocean Springs, MS
20	Wilson, Trip	6-2/195	So.	Tupelo, MS

	OFFENSIVE LINEMEN	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
72	Boone, Canon	6-4/290	Fr.	Kemah, TX
51	Buys, Reed	6-4/300	Jr.	Vicksburg, MS
68	Cavazos Jr., Gabe	6-4/285	Fr.	Lake Cormorant, MS
52	Jackson, Grant	6-6/310	So.	Brookhaven, MS
69	Johnson, Kwatrivous	6-7/320	Sr.	Greenwood, MS
58	Jones, Kameron	6-5/305	Sr.	Starkville, MS
66	Jones, Nick	6-3/300	Jr.	Byhalia, MS
75	Lewis, Percy	6-8/360	Jr.	Sallis, MS
64	Losoya III, Steven	6-4/305	Jr.	Nashville, TN
76	Reese IV, Albert	6-7/315	Fr.	Edmonton, AB
71	Riley, Jim	6-4/270	Fr.	Iuka, MS
73	Ryan, Max	6-4/260	Fr.	Key West, FL
63	Sharp, LaQuinston	6-3/300	Sr.	Columbus, MS
57	Smith, Cole	6-3/305	Sr.	Pontotoc, MS
74	Williams, Carson	6-5/300	Jr.	Forest, MS
65	Zakkak, JT	6-3/295	So.	Gulfport, MS

	DEFENSIVE LINEMEN	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
91	Anderson, Deonte	6-3/235	Fr.	Fort Meade, FL
92	Banks, Jevon	6-2/300	So.	Olive Branch, MS
5	Charlton, Randy	6-3/265	Sr.	Goulds, FL
	Clayton, Jacarius	6-6/275	Fr.	Tupelo, MS
94	Crumedy, Jaden	6-5/310	Sr.	Hattiesburg, MS
6	Davis, Jordan	6-4/265	Sr.	Memphis, TN
15	Harris, Jack	6-3/270	Jr.	Sumrall, MS
95	Mata'afa, Matai	6-1/220	Fr.	Lahaina, HI
22	Pickering, Nathan	6-4/300	Sr.	Mount Olive, MS
9	Russell, De'Monte	6-4/265	Jr.	Jackson, MS
93	Young, Cameron	6-3/310	Sr.	Crosby, MS

	LINEBACKERS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
45	Cooper, Ty	6-4/240	So.	Louisville, MS
44	Johnson, Jett	6-2/235	Sr.	Tupelo, MS
37	Lewis, John	6-3/230	Fr.	Canton, MS
40	Mitchell, Nic	6-2/230	Fr.	Jacksonville, FL
16	Page, DeShawn	6-2/225	Jr.	Knoxville, TN
26	Purvis, J.P.	6-1/220	Jr.	Pelahatchie, MS
55	Robinson, Michael	6-2/210	Fr.	Vicksburg, MS
34	Timbs, Sherman	6-2/265	Sr.	Indianola, MS
14	Watson, Nathaniel	6-2/240	Sr.	Maplesville, AL
2	Wheat, Tyrus	6-2/265	Sr.	Amite, LA

	DEFENSIVE BACKS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
1	Banks, Marcus	6-0/180	Jr.	Houston, TX
19	Duncan, Collin	6-0/205	Sr.	Montgomery, AL
10	Ellington, Corey	6-3/185	So.	Lexington, MS
13	Forbes, Emmanuel	6-0/180	Jr.	Grenada, MS
27	Furdge, Esaias	6-0/185	Sr.	Clarksdale, MS
0	Green, Jalen	6-1/200	Sr.	Houston, TX
48	Griffin, Eldric	6-0/195	Fr.	Loganville, GA
46	Hardrick, William	6-1/160	Fr.	Adamsville, AL
24	Lawrence, Dylan	6-4/205	Jr.	George County, MS
7	Matthews, Jackie	6-0/195	Sr.	Pinson, AL
4	Nicholson, DeCarlos	6-3/200	Jr.	Petal, MS
12	Preston Jr., Shawn	6-0/205	Sr.	St. James, LA
30	Richardson, Decamerion	6-2/195	Jr.	Cullen, LA
41	Swanson, Cody	6-0/195	Jr.	Madison, MS
	Washington, Hunter	5-11/181	Fr.	Katy, TX

	SPECIALISTS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
29	Biscardi, Massimo (K)	5-11/215	Sr.	Downingtown, PA
41	Cox, Colby (LS)	6-1/235	So.	Woodstock, GA
43	Hammond, Hayes (LS)	5-10/205	So.	Tupelo, MS
55	Robich, Rex (LS)	6-4/210	Fr.	Palm Coast, FL
56	Trafford, Archer (P)	6-2/240	Jr.	Shreveport, LA

2022 **SIGNEES**

Perhaps the best word to describe Mississippi State's 2022 recruiting class is "balanced." The Bulldogs were able to assemble a group that adds talent at just about every spot on the field.

Part of head coach Mike Leach's stated goal for this class was to strengthen his team along the line of scrimmage, and MSU did just that. On the offensive front, Percy Lewis was the headliner as the country's fifth-ranked junior college recruit per 247Sports. Lewis is expected to have a chance to step in and play immediately, possibly becoming State's starting left tackle.

A pair of four-star prospects highlighted MSU's defensive line haul. Both Trevion Williams and Jacarius Clayton are high-ceiling players but might have to wait their turn, as State's 2022 team is experienced along the defensive front.

One defensive player who could compete for immediate playing time is junior college transfer DeCarlos Nicholson. The three-star cornerback is one of several candidates who could help soften the blow of losing Martin Emerson.

Of course, it seems that no Leach recruiting class is complete without talented players at the skill positions with the potential to become Air Raid stars. Four-star Marquez Dortch was the jewel of the class at wide receiver.

At quarterback, the Bulldogs inked Braedyn Locke. Locke is a four-star signal-caller, per Rivals and ESPN, and has a bright future after smashing Texas high school records. Locke joins Leach's program after a prep career in which he threw for the most touchdowns of any Class 6A Texas player ever, while also finishing second all time in passing yardage.

MSU has also picked up a handful of guys from the transfer portal who might end up being vital pieces. Marcus Banks comes to Starkville from Alabama, and Jackie Matthews arrives from West Virginia; both, at the very least, should make State a much deeper group in the secondary.

Receivers Justin Robinson and Jordan Mosley, from Georgia and Northwestern, respectively, might make instant impacts in the State offense as the Bulldogs try to replace the production of the now-gone Makai Polk.

Meanwhile, Coastal Carolina transfer Massimo Biscardi could be able to solidify what was an inconsistent Mississippi State kicking game a season ago.

BY POSITION

Defensive Linemen	4
Offensive Linemen	4
Wide Receivers	4
Defensive Backs	3
Linebackers	3
Athletes	2
Quarterbacks	1

BY STATE

Mississippi	13
Georgia	2
Louisiana	2
Texas	2
Alabama	1
Tennessee	1

RECRUIT SPOTLIGHT

DECARLOS NICHOLSON

CB • Petal, MS

DeCarlos Nicholson was a quarterback for Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College back in 2020. Yet when the season wrapped, he wasn't so sure he wanted to be a signal-caller anymore.

"As the season went on, my playing time got slimmer," Nicholson remembers. "So, we went into the offseason, and I just started working receiver. I worked corner. I worked quarterback. Then we got back to school, and I told the defensive coordinator, 'I'm coming with you.'"

Just like that, Nicholson was a cornerback. It's turned out to be a life-changing, career-accelerating move. By the time Nicholson put pen to paper to join the Bulldogs last December, he wasn't just a corner — he was one of the country's most sought-after junior college defensive backs.

Last season was Nicholson's first-ever year on defense. Even dating back to high school, Nicholson was primarily a quarterback. However, he fit on defense like a clanging cowbell fits in the hands of the fans who cram Davis Wade Stadium each fall.

Suffice it to say, Nicholson still feels a bit like a quarterback between his ears — always thinking and always watching. He's just quarterbacking on the other side of the line of scrimmage now. In fact, that was part of his message to the Bulldogs in his recruiting process.

"I said, 'You're going to have two quarterbacks out here, I'll just be the quarterback on defense,'" Nicholson says.

Nicholson's confidence, smarts and of course his tremendous athleticism and skill set are precisely what Mississippi State was wanting when it brought him on board.

Name	Pos	Ht/Wt	Hometown	247	ESPN	Rivals	Nat. Rank
Jackson Cannon	OT	6-5/310	Forsyth, GA	★★★	★★★	★★	1,175
Jacarius Clayton	DL	6-6/270	Tupelo, MS	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	367
Audavion Collins	CB	6-0/165	Covington, GA	★★★	★★★	★★★	919
Kalvin Dinkins	DL	6-2/315	Lake, MS	★★★	★★★	★★★	920
Marquez Dortch	WR	6-0/175	Lucedale, MS	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	242
Javae Gilmore	LB	6-4/200	Amite, LA	★★★	★★★	★★★★	436
Jarnorris Hopson	WR	5-11/190	Tunica, MS	★★★	★★★	★★★	802
Dakota Jordan	ATH	6-0/220	Jackson, MS	★★★	★★★	★★★	714
Jakson LaHue	OT	6-5/285	Azle, TX	★★★	★★★	★★★	995
Percy Lewis	OT	6-8/345	Sallis, MS	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	5*
Braedyn Locke	QB	6-1/205	Rockwall, TX	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	386
Wesley Miller	S	5-10/185	Columbus, MS	★★★	★★★	★★★	805
Khalid Moore	LB	6-2/206	Poplarville, MS	★★★	★★★	★★★★	457
DeCarlos Nicholson	CB	6-3/195	Petal, MS	★★★	★★★	★★★	13*
Kaydin Pope	WR	6-0/175	Savannah, TN	★★★	★★★★	★★★	584
Donterry Russell	EDGE	6-4/200	Jackson, MS	★★★	★★★	★★★	565
Trent Singleton	ATH	6-0/190	Edwards, MS	★★★	★★★	★★★	776
Avery Sledge	LB	6-3/210	Hattiesburg, MS	★★★	★★★	★★★	871
Lucas Taylor	OL	6-5/310	Mobile, AL	★★★	★★★★	★★★	473
Zavion Thomas	WR	5-11/190	Gretna, LA	★★★	★★★★	★★★	398
Trevion Williams	DL	6-4/255	Crystal Springs, MS	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	189

*junior college transfer

OLE MISS REBELS

National Forecast: 28 • SEC West Prediction: 5 • Projected Record: 8-4, 4-4 SEC

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Lane Kiffin
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 15-8 (2 years)
CAREER RECORD: 76-42 (9+ years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS: John David Baker, Charlie Weis Jr.
DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Maurice Crum, Chris Partridge
LOCATION: Oxford, MS
STADIUM: Vaught-Hemingway Stadium (64,038)

KEY REBELS

JONATHAN MINGO, WR The Rebels' heavy losses at receiver will require Mingo to step into the spotlight.

CEDRIC JOHNSON, DE Johnson is the team's leading returner in sacks at 6.5 and has 9.5 in his career.

AJ FINLEY, S Leader of a secondary that returns 12 players and added talent through the portal. He had 89 tackles and three interceptions in 2021.

KEY LOSSES

MATT CORRAL, QB Corral was the Rebels' heartbeat the last two seasons and saved his best for last in 2021, throwing for 3,349 yards and 20 touchdowns against just five interceptions.

JERRION EALY and SNOOP CONNER, RBs Ealy and Conner both left early for the NFL Draft, and they will be missed — the duo ran for 1,415 yards and 18 scores in 2021.

CHANCE CAMPBELL, LB Campbell — a Maryland transfer — was a stalwart up the middle. He led Ole Miss with 111 tackles and left for the NFL with a year of eligibility remaining.

THE VERDICT

The Rebels will be hard-pressed to match last year's 10 wins, but thanks to Lane Kiffin's work in the transfer portal, the drop-off won't be steep. A high-powered offense was refueled with the additions of quarterback Jaxson Dart, running back Zach Evans and receiver Jordan Watkins to pair with one of the SEC's top lines. Ole Miss took a step forward on defense last season, and new co-coordinator Chris Partridge is counting on several portal additions to deliver with key departures at every level. The Thanksgiving showdown at Mississippi State might decide who finishes higher in the West.

POSTSEASON: Texas Bowl vs. Texas

BETTORS' BOX

OLE MISS FUTURES

ODDS TO WIN NATIONAL TITLE: 100/1
ODDS TO WIN SEC: 50/1
ODDS TO WIN SEC WEST: 20/1
SEASON WIN O/U: 8 (-110)
HEISMAN CONTENDERS: QB Jaxson Dart (60/1); QB Luke Altmyer (200/1); RB Zach Evans (300/1)
BETTORS' BYTE: Ole Miss is just 3-9-1 ATS in the last 13 games in which they've been a conference home underdog.

Information provided by the Bet the Board staff

The cupboard at Ole Miss has been thoroughly replenished, but the Rebels are going to look a lot different than they did during their historic 2021 campaign.

Ole Miss won 10 regular-season games for the first time in program history last year and earned a berth in the Sugar Bowl. That feat was accomplished largely on the shoulders of seasoned veterans, with the headliners being quarterback Matt Corral and All-America defensive end Sam Williams. Corral and Williams are both in the NFL now, and the team's top four rushers, three leading receivers and top linebackers are all gone. Also departed are offensive coordinator Jeff Lebby (Oklahoma) and co-defensive coordinator D.J. Durkin (Texas A&M).

Head coach Lane Kiffin used the transfer portal to fill in the holes on both sides of the ball and did so with great success — the Rebels have a consensus top transfer class, due in no small part to the addition of quarterback Jaxson Dart. Charlie Weis Jr., who was most recently at South Florida but also worked under Kiffin at Florida Atlantic, was hired as co-offensive coordinator with passing game coordinator John David Baker. Former WKU assistant Maurice Crum will serve as co-defensive coordinator with Chris Partridge, who held the position last season.

OFFENSE Dart played in six games for USC in 2021, throwing for 1,353 yards with nine touchdowns and five interceptions. With Corral's departure, the quarterback job comes down to him and fellow sophomore Luke Altmyer. Dart adds a running element reminiscent of Corral.

Ole Miss' top four rushers have departed — Jerrion Ealy, Snoop Conner and Corral all left early for the NFL, and Henry Parrish Jr. transferred to Miami (Fla.). That's 2,582 rushing yards gone from a year ago. Kiffin hit the transfer portal to reload the backfield, signing TCU's Zach Evans and SMU's Ulysses Bentley IV. Evans is a former five-star recruit who ran for 1,063 yards and nine touchdowns in two seasons with the Horned Frogs, while Bentley ran for 1,559 yards and 15 touchdowns in three seasons with the Mustangs.

Wide receivers Dontario Drummond and Braylon Sanders had a combined 1,577 yards and 12 touchdowns last season, and Jahcour Pearson added 392 receiving yards. All three are gone, leaving senior Jonathan Mingo as a focal point. Mingo played in only six games last season but has prior experience, having caught 61 passes for 897 yards and seven touchdowns in his career. Louisville transfer Jordan Watkins was second on the Cardinals in receiving yards (529) and touchdowns (four) in 2021 and will play a large role.

The offensive line returns largely intact — albeit reshuffled — and fortified by the return of senior Nick Broeker. Broeker started the last two seasons at left tackle, opted against the NFL Draft and will play guard this year. WKU transfer Mason Brooks will start at one tackle spot, while junior Jeremy James will man the other side.

JONATHAN MINGO

Tom DiPace

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Troy
Sept. 10	Central Arkansas
Sept. 17	at Georgia Tech
Sept. 24	Tulsa
Oct. 1	Kentucky
Oct. 8	at Vanderbilt
Oct. 15	Auburn
Oct. 22	at LSU
Oct. 29	at Texas A&M
Nov. 12	Alabama
Nov. 19	at Arkansas
Nov. 24	Mississippi State

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 10-3, 6-2 SEC

Sept. 6	vs. Louisville #	W	43-24
Sept. 11	Austin Peay	W	54-17
Sept. 18	Tulane	W	61-21
Oct. 2	at Alabama	L	21-42
Oct. 9	Arkansas	W	52-51
Oct. 16	at Tennessee	W	31-26
Oct. 23	LSU	W	31-17
Oct. 30	at Auburn	L	20-31
Nov. 6	Liberty	W	27-14
Nov. 13	Texas A&M	W	29-19
Nov. 20	Vanderbilt	W	31-17
Nov. 25	at Mississippi State	W	31-21
Jan. 1	vs. Baylor %	L	7-21

#Atlanta %Sugar Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	33.7 ppg	4	24
Rushing	217.6 ypg	3	12
Passing	274.8 ypg	3	22
Total	492.5 ypg	1	6
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	24.7 ppg	8	51
Rushing	190.6 ypg	12	105
Passing	230.0 ypg	9	68
Total	420.6 ypg	11	97
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
+8	+0.62	1	19

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	29.0	61
Defense	27.4	28
Margin	+1.6	37
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	45.9%	34
Defense	45.7%	105
Margin	+0.2%	70
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	6.3	41
Defense	5.6	62
Margin	+0.7	46
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.1	74
Defense	3.8	41
Margin	+0.3	61
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	1.7	50
Actual	9	14
Margin	+7.3	10

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

40

Ole Miss went for it on fourth down 40 times, more than any other FBS team. The Rebels converted 60 percent of those attempts.

0.091

The Rebels' defense held opponents to 0.091 EPA/play on defense, the 17th-best defensive explosiveness figure in the nation. Opponents averaged just 5.82 yards per dropback in 2021.

62%

Of Ole Miss' offensive drives, 62 percent were quality possessions, the fifth-highest rate of any offense in college football. The Rebels scored only 4.11 points per quality possession, though, ranking 98th.

DEFENSE Ole Miss' defense took a huge jump last season, surrendering two touchdowns less per game than the previous season in its base 3-2-6 alignment. Williams was a big reason why, setting the single-season school record with 12.5 sacks in 2021. Maryland transfer Chance Campbell filled a void at linebacker last season, as did Mark Robinson. All three are gone in 2022, and Ole Miss is particularly inexperienced in the middle.

Again, the Rebels worked the portal, nabbing three-time All-MAC linebacker Troy Brown from Central Michigan, Georgia Tech defensive end (and former four-star recruit) Jared Ivey and Auburn defensive tackle JJ Pegues. Junior defensive end Cedric Johnson (6.5 sacks in 2021) is the team's leading returner in sacks and will step into a bigger role with Williams gone. Ole Miss is the deepest it has been up front under Kiffin.

The Rebels' experience is in the secondary, where 12 players return. Starting safety AJ Finley, nickel back Otis Reese and cornerback Deantre Prince will play prominent roles. Reese made 90 tackles in 2021, and Finley led the Rebels with three interceptions to go along with 89 stops. Senior cornerback Miles Battle has bounced between offense and defense in his career but should be settled down on defense after leading Ole Miss with eight pass breakups. Iowa State transfer Isheem Young and Auburn's Ladarius Tennison should help ease the loss of starting safety Jake Springer. There's depth aplenty at safety and nickel back.

SPECIALISTS Four-year starting punter Mac Brown is gone and will be replaced by Australian juco transfer Fraser Masin. Sophomore Caden Costa was 14-of-17 on field goals last season but was ruled ineligible late last season for breaking NCAA protocol involving performance-enhancing substances. He was practicing with the team in the spring, though the status of his appeal remains unknown. Charlotte's Jonathan Cruz has since committed to the program via the transfer portal.

FINAL ANALYSIS Ole Miss lost 11 starters from last year's team but reloaded as well as anyone through the transfer portal. Corral had a lot on his plate last season, and the winner of the quarterback derby will go a long way in determining whether or not the Rebels take a step back in 2022. Top to bottom, however, this year's roster is about as talented as the 2021 edition because of the additions. It should be another strong season in Oxford.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

WR	**1**	**Jonathan Mingo (Sr.)**	84	Qua Davis (Sr.)
WR	5	Dannis Jackson (Sr.)	88	Bralon Brown (So.)
WR	11	Jordan Watkins (Jr.)	17	Jadon Jackson (Jr.)
LT	**78**	**Jeremy James (Jr.)**	71	Jayden Williams (Fr.)
LG	**64**	**Nick Broeker (Sr.)**	79	Jordan Rhodes (Sr.)
C	**54**	**Caleb Warren (Jr.)**	56	Reece McIntyre (Jr.)
RG	73	Eli Acker (So.)	76	Cedric Melton (So.)
RT	75	Mason Brooks (Sr.)	57	Micah Pettus (Fr.)
TE	**81**	**Casey Kelly (Jr.)**	0	Michael Trigg (So.)
QB	2	Jaxson Dart (So.)	7	Luke Altmyer (So.)
RB	6	Zach Evans (Jr.)	24	Ulysses Bentley IV (Jr.)

DEFENSE (6)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	**33**	**Cedric Johnson (Jr.)**	90	Tywone Malone (Fr.)
NT	**55**	**KD Hill (Sr.)**	89	JJ Pegues (Jr.)
DE	95	Tavius Robinson (Sr.)	15	Jared Ivey (Jr.)
LB	23	Khari Coleman (Jr.)	11	Austin Keys (So.)
LB	8	Troy Brown (Sr.)	36	Ashanti Cistrunk (Sr.)
CB	**5**	**Deantre Prince (Sr.)**	37	Kyndrich Breedlove (So.)
CB	6	Miles Battle (Sr.)	20	Davison Igbinosun (Fr.)
DB	**27**	**Tysheem Johnson (So.)**	28	Markevious Brown (Fr.)
NB	**3**	**Otis Reese (Sr.)**	13	Ladarius Tennison (So.)
SS	1	Isheem Young (Jr.)	16	MJ Daniels (So.)
FS	**21**	**AJ Finley (Sr.)**	25	Trey Washington (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K		Jonathan Cruz (Sr.)	**KR**	24	Ulysses Bentley IV (Jr.)
P	92	Fraser Masin (Jr.)	**PR**	3	Kentrel Bullock (Jr.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Matt Corral	386	262	3,349	20	5
Luke Altmyer	**37**	**20**	**192**	**1**	**2**

Rushing	ATT	YDS	AVG	TD
Jerrion Ealy	133	768	5.8	5
Snoop Conner	130	647	5.0	13
Matt Corral	152	614	4.0	11
Henry Parrish Jr.	105	553	5.3	3
Kentrel Bullock	**17**	**78**	**4.6**	**0**

Receiving	REC	YDS	AVG	TD
Dontario Drummond	76	1,028	13.5	8
Jerrion Ealy	32	218	6.8	2
Jahcour Pearson	26	392	15.1	0
Braylon Sanders	24	549	22.9	4
Jonathan Mingo	**22**	**346**	**15.7**	**3**

KICKING: **Caden Costa, 14-17 FGs, 88 pts.**
TACKLES: Chance Campbell, 111; **Otis Reese, 90**
SACKS: Sam Williams, 12.5
INTERCEPTIONS: **AJ Finley, 3**

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE REBELS

Opposing Coaches Size Up Ole Miss

"You can reduce them down to the quarterback. If Jaxson Dart is a dude, they're gonna be lethal on offense and can win as many games as last year. If he's not, it's gonna be a really long, bad season. This program is going to live and die with quarterbacks as long as Lane Kiffin's there, so … low floor, high ceiling. … [OC Jeff] Lebby leaving is going to be a bigger hit behind the scenes of the program than the play-calling or development. He was de facto head coach for a lot of stuff Lane wasn't around for and put out a lot of fires. … They're relying on transfers for both starting roles and quality depth at almost every skill position on offense. That's a big gamble. The TCU back [Zach Evans] is good, the transfers at receiver are good, but that's risky. Culture is a real thing, and with new OCs, there's so much uncertainty. … The defense still looks like they're shaking off the probation years, but they aren't as bad as they were. D.J. Durkin got them turned around in the bigger areas, but he's gone, and they're not really deep. With all the changes on offense, they'll need to be at least as good as they were last year. … Let's see how Lane is maturing. Almost all of the pieces he had on staff and on the roster that made last season special are gone. He's starting almost from scratch, and it's going to take a different kind of head coach than he's been in Oxford to continue the momentum they had in '21."

OUTSIDE THE HUDDLE

LANE ON NIL Some of the most thoughtful observations on NIL come, not surprisingly, from Ole Miss head coach Lane Kiffin. "I've obviously said a lot about NIL from the beginning of it," he says. "Let's make sure that we understand: I love that the players are getting paid. And I just say how it is. So, I guess I got called a clown before for saying how it is. NIL has a lot to do with where players go. And to not think that is crazy. It would literally be like being a head coach in the NFL, signing a great free agency class … and coming up here and saying to you guys, 'The contracts had nothing to do with why the players came here, and they just wanted to come play for me.' Obviously, it has a lot to do with where players go, and it should. … Adults choose jobs, a lot of times, for money, for salary. So, why would a kid not?"

OTIS REESE

Tom DiPace

CONFIDENT QBs One of the biggest stories this offseason is the race to replace Matt Corral. Jaxson Dart has extensive experience from his time at USC, while Luke Altmyer filled in admirably given the circumstances when Corral was injured in the Sugar Bowl. "I committed (to USC) with another kid who was in my class. So for me, it's kind of similar," Dart says. "(Altmyer and I) obviously have the same goals in mind." Altmyer believes he has what it takes, too. "I believe in myself. I really do," Altmyer says. "I understand the nature of the business, and everything like that. But I go to work every day with the belief that I can lead this team."

HIGH EXPECTATIONS Ole Miss returns a handful of players who saw significant action in the defensive backfield a season ago. Safeties AJ Finley and Otis Reese are back, as are cornerbacks Deantre Prince and Miles Battle. A handful of freshmen who played in 2021 are also a year older and better. The Rebels also added talent in the transfer portal, including Auburn's Ladarius Tennison and Iowa State's Isheem Young. "I think we're going to be great," safety Tysheem Johnson says. "I think we're going to be the best secondary in the country this year."

RISING STAR

Redshirt freshman defensive lineman **TYWONE MALONE** was a highly touted four-star prospect who didn't make the type of impact many expected in 2021. Malone — who played baseball in the spring — is a tremendous athlete with the ability to make a major difference up front.

2022 OLE MISS ROSTER

	QUARTERBACKS	**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
7	Altmyer, Luke	6-1/200	So.	Starkville, MS
2	Dart, Jaxson	6-2/220	So.	Kaysville, UT
12	Dent, Kinkead	6-4/205	Jr.	Yazoo City, MS
21	Grado, Alex	6-0/200	Fr.	Los Gatos, CA
20	Woche, Jack	6-1/200	Fr.	Austin, TX
	RUNNING BACKS	**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
24	Bentley IV, Ulysses	5-11/200	Jr.	Houston, TX
3	Bullock, Kentrel	5-11/200	Jr.	Columbia, MS
6	Evans, Zach	6-0/215	Jr.	Houston, TX
29	Jones, Matt	5-7/180	Fr.	Jackson, MS
4	Judkins, Quinshon	5-11/220	Fr.	Pike Road, AL
30	McAfee, Fred	5-8/200	Fr.	Madison, MS
34	Miller, Bobo	5-7/170	So.	Kosciusko, MS
35	Shephard, Urriah	6-1/200	Sr.	Houston, MS
26	Woullard, Isaiah	5-9/210	Sr.	Hattiesburg, MS
	RECEIVERS	**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
28	Boucvalt, Lex	5-7/155	So.	Austin, TX
14	Britt II, Marc	6-1/185	So.	Carol City, FL
88	Brown, Bralon	6-2/195	So.	Miramar, FL
89	Buckhaulter, Brandon	6-1/205	Fr.	Flowood, MS
23	Burnett, Drew	6-1/180	Fr.	Memphis, TN
84	Davis, Qua	5-11/210	Sr.	Biggersville, MS
86	Henry, JJ	5-9/170	Fr.	McKinney, TX
5	Jackson, Dannis	6-0/170	Sr.	Sumrall, MS
27	Knox, Jalen	6-0/205	Sr.	Arlington, TX
1	Mingo, Jonathan	6-2/225	Sr.	Brandon, MS
39	Pfeifer, Joshua	6-1/175	Fr.	Nashville, TN
15	Shy, Sellers	6-1/190	Jr.	Memphis, TN
36	Vinson, Rayf	6-0/195	Fr.	Madison, MS
19	Wade, Dayton	5-9/175	Jr.	Atlanta, GA
11	Watkins, Jordan	5-11/190	Jr.	Louisville, KY
31	Wilson, Calvin	6-1/195	Fr.	Thompson's Station, TN
	TIGHT ENDS	**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
80	Hess, Jonathan	6-5/230	Sr.	Vestavia Hills, AL
81	Kelly, Casey	6-3/255	Jr.	Niagara Falls, NY
0	Trigg, Michael	6-3/240	So.	Tampa, FL
47	Ware, Matt	6-3/240	So.	Little Rock, AR
87	Wolfe, Hudson	6-7/230	Fr.	Savannah, TN
	OFFENSIVE LINEMEN	**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
73	Acker, Eli	6-5/295	So.	Columbus, MS
72	Braun, Tobias	6-7/315	So.	Freiburg im Breisgau, Ger.
64	Broeker, Nick	6-5/315	Sr.	Springfield, IL
75	Brooks, Mason	6-6/315	Sr.	Cedar Park, TX
74	Cade, Erick	6-6/345	Fr.	Denton, TX
69	Greer, Jack	6-5/255	Fr.	Germantown, TN
77	Hall, Hamilton	6-5/315	Sr.	Atlanta, GA
78	James, Jeremy	6-5/305	Jr.	Cumming, GA
56	McIntyre, Reece	6-5/305	Jr.	Buford, GA
76	Melton, Cedric	6-5/300	So.	Houston, TX
66	Nicely, Cedrick	6-5/310	Fr.	Gainesville, GA
57	Pettus, Micah	6-7/360	Fr.	Madison, AL
79	Rhodes, Jordan	6-6/365	Sr.	Fairburn, GA
62	Shouse, Luke	6-6/290	So.	Nolensville, TN
54	Warren, Caleb	6-5/310	Jr.	Louisville, MS
71	Williams, Jayden	6-5/300	Fr.	Conway, AR
	DEFENSIVE LINEMEN	**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
12	Brown, Jakivuan	6-3/250	So.	Horn Lake, MS
17	Clowney, Demon	6-4/250	So.	Baltimore, MD
50	Cunningham, Jalen	6-5/330	Sr.	Odenville, AL
98	Dicks, Jaden	6-4/270	Fr.	Etobicoke, ON
97	Gordon, Jamond	6-2/290	Jr.	Meridian, MS
92	Hawkins, JJ	6-1/265	Fr.	Lawrenceville, GA
55	Hill, KD	6-1/310	Sr.	Eufaula, AL
96	Iton, Isaiah	6-2/290	Jr.	Houston, TX
15	Ivey, Jared	6-5/265	Jr.	Suwanee, GA
45	Johnson, Amani	6-0/245	Sr.	Abbeville, MS
33	Johnson, Cedric	6-3/265	Jr.	Mobile, AL
9	Mack, Brandon	6-3/250	So.	Montgomery, AL
90	Malone, Tywone	6-4/300	Fr.	Jamesburg, NJ
89	Pegues, JJ	6-2/315	Jr.	Oxford, MS
52	Robbins, Taleeq	6-3/295	So.	Philadelphia, PA
95	Robinson, Tavius	6-6/265	Sr.	Guelph, ON
99	Rollins, DeSanto	6-3/305	So.	Baton Rouge, LA
58	Smith, Demarcus	6-3/295	Fr.	Birmingham, AL
	LINEBACKERS	**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
8	Brown, Troy	6-1/220	Sr.	Flint, MI
59	Burkes, Tyler	5-10/250	Fr.	Tampa, FL
36	Cistrunk, Ashanti	6-1/230	Sr.	Louisville, MS
23	Coleman, Khari	6-2/220	Jr.	New Orleans, LA
53	Craig, Carter	6-0/220	So.	Jackson, TN
54	Gibson, Carter	6-0/240	So.	Germantown, TN
48	Griffith, Andrew	6-0/225	Sr.	Bentonville, AR
35	Hughes, Reginald	6-2/230	Jr.	Tunica, MS
11	Keys, Austin	6-2/245	So.	Collins, MS
57	Ladd, Clayton	5-11/250	Sr.	Brentwood, TN
56	Lockhart II, Danny	5-11/225	So.	Redlands, CA
44	Porchivina, John	6-1/220	Jr.	Novato, CA
	DEFENSIVE BACKS	**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
6	Battle, Miles	6-4/205	Sr.	Houston, TX
14	Bermudez, Derek	6-1/190	So.	Jacksonville, FL
37	Breedlove, Kyndrich	5-11/180	So.	Nashville, TN
28	Brown, Markevious	5-10/180	Fr.	Pahokee, FL
16	Daniels, MJ	6-1/200	So.	Lucedale, MS
40	Denton, Jalen	5-10/180	So.	Memphis, TN
21	Finley, AJ	6-3/205	Sr.	Mobile, AL
20	Igbinosun, Davison	6-2/185	Fr.	Union, NJ
19	Jernigan, Jordan	6-0/215	Jr.	Tupelo, MS
27	Johnson, Tysheem	5-10/200	So.	Philadelphia, PA
43	Newman, Daniel	5-9/195	So.	Tallahassee, FL
32	O'Bryant, Richard	5-9/180	Fr.	Brandon, MS
5	Prince, Deantre	6-0/180	Sr.	Charleston, MS
3	Reese, Otis	6-3/215	Sr.	Leesburg, GA
42	Sabbatini, Elijah	6-1/200	Fr.	Biloxi, MS
22	Stinson, Jarell	5-9/170	Fr.	Opelika, AL
13	Tennison, Ladarius	5-9/200	So.	Rockledge, FL
41	Terrell, CJ	5-9/225	Sr.	Oxford, MS
25	Washington, Trey	5-11/205	So.	Trussville, AL
29	Williams, Demarko	5-10/175	Fr.	Atlanta, GA
1	Young, Isheem	5-10/215	Jr.	Philadelphia, PA
	SPECIALISTS	**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
43	Costa, Caden (K)	6-0/200	So.	Mandeville, LA
	Cruz, Jonathan	5-9/175	Sr.	Cartersville, GA
97	Gebhart, Land (K)	5-10/155	So.	Ridgeland, MS
41	Landrum, Solomon (LS)	5-10/200	Jr.	Hattiesburg, MS
49	Lawrence, Jared (LS)	5-10/200	So.	Lebanon, TN
92	Masin, Fraser (P)	6-5/235	Jr.	Brisbane, Australia
93	Nation, Cale (K)	5-10/155	Jr.	Madison, MS

2022 **SIGNEES**

Lane Kiffin assured fans last December that a modest high school signing class ranked 10th in the SEC wasn't the end of the story regarding new players coming to Ole Miss. He spoke of the transfer portal and how it was changing college football. Lo and behold, Kiffin was correct — as of this writing, the Rebels have one of the top-ranked transfer classes in America and are No. 1 in the SEC.

While Ole Miss added some nice high school players — four-star defensive tackle Zxavian Harris, four-star cornerback Davison Igbinosun and three-star running back Quinshon Judkins are among the standouts of the class — the Rebels will largely be defined by transfer players in 2022 and beyond. Thirteen of the transfers arrived for spring football.

That list starts with former USC quarterback Jaxson Dart, who was one of the highest-rated players in the portal after showing glimpses of stardom as a Trojan. He is one of the leading contenders to take over at quarterback following the departure of star Matt Corral. The Rebels also reloaded the running back room after losing their top three tailbacks, bringing in former TCU running back Zach Evans and SMU's Ulysses Bentley IV. Former Louisville receiver Jordan Watkins will also play a big role offensively. USC transfer Michael Trigg is a tantalizing option at tight end for Ole Miss in 2022. "I don't, like, tell him this, because everybody says this and has probably told him this forever. His potential's unbelievable. His catching radius and balance and body control, they don't make many like that in the world. He's done great things already," Kiffin says of Trigg.

Ole Miss lost plenty on defense in the offseason but used the portal to plug those holes as well. Central Michigan's Troy Brown and TCU's Khari Coleman should fill in at linebacker, and defensive linemen JJ Pegues and Jared Ivey should provide an extra lift up front after transferring from Auburn and Georgia Tech, respectively. Auburn safety Ladarius Tennison and Iowa State safety Isheem Young add to an experienced secondary.

The Rebels were, to an extent, the victims of their own success following a 10-3 campaign in 2021, losing significant talent on both sides of the ball. But the transfer portal provided an influx of talent to a program not expecting to drop off anytime soon. Kiffin has said one of the advantages of taking experienced portal players is it provides less opportunity for "hit-and-miss" than high school players might. That was clearly a point of emphasis in the offseason.

BY POSITION

Offensive Linemen	5
Defensive Backs	4
Defensive Linemen	2
Linebackers	2
Wide Receivers	2
Athletes	1
Running Backs	1
Tight Ends	1

BY STATE

Mississippi	5
Georgia	3
Alabama	2
Texas	2
Arkansas	1
Florida	1
Louisiana	1
New Jersey	1
Tennessee	1
Virginia	1

RECRUIT SPOTLIGHT

QUINSHON JUDKINS

RB • Pike Road, AL

Quinshon Judkins was not the most sought-after member of the Ole Miss high school signing class, but given what the Rebels lost in the offseason, Judkins could have a significant role to play.

Judkins is from Pike Road, Ala., and put up big numbers in high school, capping off his prep career with a 1,534-yard, 26-touchdown campaign in 2021. Judkins enrolled at Ole Miss early and was getting a decent amount of reps with the starters in the spring. He had offers from many of the nation's premier programs, including Notre Dame, Florida, Auburn and Tennessee.

Ole Miss lost Jerrion Ealy, Snoop Conner and Henry Parrish Jr. in the offseason but picked up TCU's Zach Evans and SMU's Ulysses Bentley IV. Three running backs got significant work in the Rebels' offense in 2021, though, and that could again be the case.

Junior Kentrel Bullock returns to the backfield after running for 78 yards on 17 carries last season. With Evans and Bentley likely to receive a lot of carries between them, Judkins and Bullock could be vying for touches. A four-headed monster in the backfield isn't out of the realm of possibility, either.

"I do [see them as potential early contributors]. I think both those guys have come in with a unique mindset," coach Lane Kiffin says of Judkins and freshman cornerback Davison Igbinosun. "Remember, these guys are really high school seniors; they don't seem that way."

There is precedent for a freshman RB to see significant action under Kiffin. Parrish, now at Miami (Fla.), ran for 263 yards as a true freshman. Kiffin's offenses get publicity for quarterback play, but at their core, they run the ball extremely well — Ole Miss was 12th in rushing yards per game nationally last season and 26th the season before.

Name	Pos	Ht/Wt	Hometown	247	ESPN	Rivals	Nat. Rank
Tyler Banks	ATH	6-3/235	Blackstone, VA	★★★	★★★	★★★	886
Flip Carswell	OT	6-7/275	Tennille, GA	★★★	★★★	★★★	607
Nick Cull	CB	5-11/175	Donalsonville, GA	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	391
Preston Cushman	OT	6-5/280	St. Petersburg, FL	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,022
Jeremiah Dillon	WR	6-2/175	Tylertown, MS	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	328
Cam East	OT	6-7/280	Marreo, LA	★★★	★★★	★★★	619
Timi Gagophien	OT	6-6/325	Houston, TX	★★★	★★★	★★★	719
Taylor Groves	S	6-2/195	Cross Plains, TN	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	290
Zxavian Harris	DL	6-7/335	Canton, MS	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	136
Kyirin Heath	TE	6-4/235	Mansfield, TX	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,008
Reginald Hughes	LB	6-2/230	Tunica, MS	★★★	★★★	★★★	16*
Bryson Hurst	OT	6-6/320	Gautier, MS	★★★	★★★	★★★	402
Davison Igbinosun	CB	6-2/185	Union, NJ	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	160
Quinshon Judkins	RB	5-11/220	Pike Road, AL	★★★	★★★	★★★	561
Larry Simmons	WR	6-1/190	Moss Point, MS	★★★	★★★	★★★	572
Jarell Stinson	CB	5-9/170	Opelika, AL	★★★	★★★	★★★	443
Jaylon White	LB	6-4/205	Little Rock, AR	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,108
Jaron Willis	EDGE	6-2/220	Leesburg, GA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	185

TEXAS A&M AGGIES

National Forecast: 5 • SEC West Prediction: 2 • Projected Record: 10-2, 6-2 SEC

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH: Jimbo Fisher
RECORD AT SCHOOL: 34-14 (4 years)
CAREER RECORD: 117-37 (12 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Darrell Dickey
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: D.J. Durkin
LOCATION: College Station, TX
STADIUM: Kyle Field (102,733)

KEY AGGIES

ANTONIO JOHNSON, DB Was second on the team in tackles and arned All-America recognition at nickel in 2021, but he may shift to safety this season.

AINIAS SMITH, WR Versatile and consistent, Smith has posted better than 40 catches and 500 receiving yards in each of the last two seasons.

DEVON ACHANE, RB Big-play threat takes over as the featured back after rushing for 910 yards in a backup role.

KEY LOSSES

KENYON GREEN, LG Green was a two-time All-American who started every game of his collegiate career.

DEMARVIN LEAL, DE An All-American in 2021, Leal led the Aggies in sacks and tackles for a loss.

JALEN WYDERMYER, TE Named All-SEC all three years of his career and led the Aggies in receiving yards last season.

THE VERDICT

There's no shortage of momentum (or expectations) in College Station after head coach Jimbo Fisher reeled in the nation's No. 1 recruiting class, including eight five-star recruits. The Aggies' success won't be limited to off-field accolades either, as Fisher's team is poised for another run to the CFB Playoff. A standout defense has a new coordinator (D.J. Durkin) and is under construction up front, but several players from the '22 haul are likely to make an instant impact. After a season of inconsistent quarterback play, Texas A&M needs better production under center and more big plays on offense to have a shot at dethroning Alabama atop the West.

POSTSEASON: Sugar Bowl vs. Baylor

BETTORS' BOX

TEXAS A&M FUTURES

ODDS TO WIN NATIONAL TITLE: 30/1
ODDS TO WIN SEC: 18/1
ODDS TO WIN SEC WEST: 27/1
SEASON WIN O/U: 9 (Over -120)
HEISMAN CONTENDERS: QB Haynes King (200/1); QB Max Johnson (200/1); RB Devon Achane (300/1); QB Conner Weigman (300/1)
BETTORS' BYTE: Jimbo Fisher is 12-3 ATS in non-conference games at Texas A&M.

Information provided by the Bet the Board staff

The visions of grandeur Texas A&M enjoyed when it hired head coach Jimbo Fisher may be finally coming into focus. Two seasons ago, the Aggies beat every opponent but Alabama. Last season, they defeated Alabama. Next, they aim to finish ahead of Alabama in the grueling SEC West Division race.

Obviously, that's easier said than done. Beating Alabama once is rare. Doing it in back-to-back seasons is almost unheard of.

But receiver Ainias Smith, All-America defensive back Antonio Johnson and 2021 Freshman All-America offensive linemen Bryce Foster and Reuben Fatheree II head a good nucleus of returning starters. Furthermore, A&M gets an influx of elite talent from a recruiting class that experts regard as perhaps the best ever.

OFFENSE Injuries compromised the Aggies' offense last season. The costliest was to quarterback Haynes King, who sustained a broken leg early in the second game. Replacement Zach Calzada excelled in the upset of Alabama but largely struggled against other Power 5 opponents.

Though Calzada transferred to Auburn, King isn't guaranteed to reclaim the starting job. He's vying with transfer Max Johnson, who threw 27 touchdown passes and just six interceptions for LSU last season, and five-star prospect Conner Weigman.

Whoever wins the quarterback competition will throw to a good group of receivers with potential to be great. Smith has had 90 receptions and 12 touchdowns catches over the last two seasons. He can turn short-to-medium passes into big gains. A bona fide deep threat is desperately needed, though. Five-star freshman Evan Stewart could fill that role. He had an excellent spring and figures to make an immediate impact. Sophomore Muhsin "Moose" Muhammad III came on strong last year and may be ready to break out.

Junior running back Devon Achane may also break out. That is, assuming he hasn't already broken out. A world-class sprinter, Achane rushed for 910 yards last season as a backup. His carries should spike in the featured role.

He'll run behind an offensive line that should be improved at four of the five positions. Fatheree and Foster were excellent as freshmen and should be even better as sophomores. Junior guard Layden Robinson should be better, too. He played through injuries in 2021 but is now healthy. Redshirt freshman Trey Zuhn, once a high four-star prospect, will replace departed Jahmir Johnson at tackle. The biggest task is replacing two-time All-America guard Kenyon Green. Aki Ogunbiyi, who started four games, or four-star freshman Kam Dewberry are likely to replace Green.

DEFENSE Defensive coordinator D.J. Durkin supervised top-15 units at Florida in 2013 and '14 and at Michigan in '15. He aims to do the same now at Texas A&M. Durkin has a lot of talent with which to work, especially in the secondary, where four starters return.

Durkin's most difficult task might be deciding where

ANTONIO JOHNSON

Tim Umphrey

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Sam Houston
Sept. 10	Appalachian State
Sept. 17	Miami (Fla.)
Sept. 24	vs. Arkansas #
Oct. 1	at Mississippi State
Oct. 8	at Alabama
Oct. 22	at South Carolina
Oct. 29	Ole Miss
Nov. 5	Florida
Nov. 12	at Auburn
Nov. 19	UMass
Nov. 26	LSU

#Arlington, TX

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 8-4, 4-4 SEC

Sept. 4	Kent State	W	41-10
Sept. 11	vs. Colorado #	W	10-7
Sept. 18	New Mexico	W	34-0
Sept. 25	vs. Arkansas %	L	10-20
Oct. 2	Mississippi State	L	22-26
Oct. 9	Alabama	W	41-38
Oct. 16	at Missouri	W	35-14
Oct. 23	South Carolina	W	44-14
Nov. 6	Auburn	W	20-3
Nov. 13	at Ole Miss	L	19-29
Nov. 20	Prairie View A&M	W	52-3
Nov. 27	at LSU	L	24-27

#Denver %Arlington

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	29.3 ppg	8	56
Rushing	183.0 ypg	7	44
Passing	208.6 ypg	12	88
Total	391.6 ypg	11	71

DEFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	15.9 ppg	2	3
Rushing	134.8 ypg	6	36
Passing	192.7 ypg	3	17
Total	327.5 ypg	3	14

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
+1	+0.08	7	62

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	26.8	109
Defense	26.3	14
Margin	+2.6	37
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	45.0%	45
Defense	36.5%	8
Margin	+8.5%	15
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	6.1	55
Defense	4.8	7
Margin	+1.3	15
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.0	84
Defense	2.9	10
Margin	+1.1	45
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	1.5	51
Actual	-1	71
Margin	-2.5	92

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck."

NUMBERS TO KNOW

2.96

Texas A&M's defense stifled opponents, allowing less than a field goal per quality possession at 2.96 points (second nationally). The Aggies ranked third in the nation in scoring defense.

-0.147

The Aggies held opponents to -0.147 EPA/play, the fourth-best efficiency figure in college football. Opponents were successful on just 35.25 percent of plays.

6.18

On all dropbacks, the Aggies gained 6.18 yards per play, ranking just 88th in the nation. The Aggies averaged -0.071 EPA/pass, 101st in the FBS.

to play junior Antonio Johnson. Johnson earned All-SEC and All-America honors as a nickel back in 2021, but he seems a perfect fit to replace Leon O'Neal at safety. The Aggies could have one of the best safety tandems in the country if he joins fourth-year starter Demani Richardson.

Johnson figures to make that move because the Aggies appear well stocked at cornerback. Starters Tyreek Chappell and Jaylon Jones return but face challenges to retain their starting roles.

Super senior Myles Jones, a starter in 2020, is back from an injury that forced him to miss almost all of last season. Sophomore Deuce Harmon flashed potential as a true freshman. Five-star prospect Denver Harris may be too good to keep off the field.

The Aggies project to be just as deep and talented up front. Defensive tackle McKinnley Jackson has been a productive part-time starter. He may be dominant in a full-time role. Jackson will have plenty of help in junior Isaiah Raikes, sophomore Shemar Turner and a quartet of five-star prospects headed by No. 1 overall recruit Walter Nolen and Floridians Shemar Stewart and Gabriel Brownlow-Dindy. A&M could be so deep inside that Turner may shift to end to join sophomores Fadil Diggs and Donell Harris.

Linebacker could be an area of concern. The Aggies allowed 62 running plays of 10 yards or more last season. That total has to drop. Sophomore Edgerrin Cooper showed promise and speed and had the fifth-highest tackle total as a true freshman. He'll join senior Andre White Jr., who made nine starts as a junior.

SPECIALISTS The Texas A&M return teams are explosive, with Achane on kickoffs and Smith on punts. Achane averaged 33.4 yards per return; Smith averaged 11.3. Punter Nik Constantinou led the SEC with a 46.6-yard average. A replacement is needed for placekicker Seth Small. That could be Caden Davis, who kicked three field goals, including a 52-yarder, in the spring game.

FINAL ANALYSIS The Aggies might be a year away from a major challenge to win the SEC West. By then, they will have an experienced quarterback and more players from their celebrated recruiting class ready to contribute. But if injuries are avoided and key freshmen make immediate impacts, the Aggies could mount a challenge this year. They at least should contend for 10 wins.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (4)

WR	1	Evan Stewart (Fr.)	8	Yulkeith Brown (So.)
WR	**0**	**Ainias Smith (Sr.)**	7	Moose Muhammad III (So.)
WR	2	Chase Lane (Jr.)	5	Jalen Preston (Sr.)
LT	60	Trey Zuhn III (Fr.)	53	Blake Trainor (Jr.)
LG	**64**	**Layden Robinson (Jr.)**	66	Jordan Spasojevic-Moko (So.)
C	**61**	**Bryce Foster (So.)**	77	Matthew Wykoff (Fr.)
RG	74	Aki Ogunbiyi (So.)	70	Josh Bankhead (So.)
RT	**76**	**Reuben Fatheree II (So.)**	53	Blake Trainor (Jr.)
TE	19	Jake Johnson (Fr.)	42	Max Wright (Sr.)
QB	13	Haynes King (So.)	14	Max Johnson (Jr.)
RB	6	Devon Achane (Jr.)	4	Amari Daniels (So.)

DEFENSE (5)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	30	Tunmise Adeleye (Fr.)	18	Donell Harris Jr. (So.)
DT	5	Shemar Turner (So.)	34	Isaiah Raikes (Jr.)
DT	35	McKinnley Jackson (Jr.)		Walter Nolen (Fr.)
DE	10	Fadil Diggs (So.)	8	Anthony Lucas (Fr.)
MLB	**32**	**Andre White Jr. (Sr.)**	23	Tarian Lee Jr. (Jr.)
WLB	45	Edgerrin Cooper (So.)	24	Chris Russell Jr. (Sr.)
CB	**7**	**Tyreek Chappell (So.)**	0	Myles Jones (Sr.)
CB	**17**	**Jaylon Jones (Jr.)**	2	Denver Harris (Fr.)
NB	11	Deuce Harmon (So.)	16	Brian George (Sr.)
S	**26**	**Demani Richardson (Sr.)**	20	Jardin Gilbert (So.)
S	**27**	**Antonio Johnson (Jr.)**	1	Bryce Anderson (Fr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	36	Caden Davis (Jr.)	**KR**	6	Devon Achane (Jr.)
P	95	Nik Constantinou (Jr.)	**PR**	0	Ainias Smith (Sr.)

2021 INDIVIDUAL STATS

Passing	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Zach Calzada	328	184	2,185	17	9
Haynes King	**35**	**22**	**300**	**2**	**3**
Blake Bost	**7**	**2**	**18**	**0**	**1**
Rushing	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Isaiah Spiller	179	1,011	5.6	6	
Devon Achane	**130**	**910**	**7.0**	**9**	
Amari Daniels	**20**	**119**	**6.0**	**1**	
LJ Johnson Jr.	**21**	**76**	**3.6**	**0**	
Yulkeith Brown	**2**	**52**	**26.0**	**0**	
Receiving	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Ainias Smith	**47**	**509**	**10.8**	**6**	
Jalen Wydermyer	40	515	12.9	4	
Isaiah Spiller	25	189	7.6	1	
Devon Achane	**24**	**261**	**10.9**	**1**	
Jalen Preston	**17**	**255**	**15.0**	**2**	

KICKING: Seth Small, 22-27 FGs, 103 pts.
TACKLES: Aaron Hansford, 91; **Antonio Johnson, 78**
SACKS: Tyree Johnson, 8.5; DeMarvin Leal, 8.5
INTERCEPTIONS: **Jaylon Jones, 2;** Leon O'Neal Jr., 2

Returning Players in **BOLD**

SCOUTING THE AGGIES

Opposing Coaches Size Up Texas A&M

"Jimbo Fisher might be a mad genius when it comes to media because they get talked about alongside Georgia and Alabama, and they're every bit an 8–4 program. He knows it, too, but I think that's part of the plan. … Their rep is that once they lose that one big game, they're not the same. When it's not all on the line, you don't ever really get their best. … What's the QB situation going to be? They took a lot of sacks last year, but they didn't really turn the ball over much, so they stayed in games. If you take Kellen [Mond] out, Jimbo's history with picking QBs isn't as great as people think. He has a huge decision here; the guy they might not want to play, Max Johnson, is probably the one with the most experience. But they didn't spend all the money on Conner Weigman to keep him on the sidelines, did they? The NIL culture is like a science experiment here. How's it going to work with the rest of the locker room? [Mike] Elko is a big loss because he did such a tremendous job as DC opposite that offense; they really complemented each other. … They have a really good offensive line. I think you're going to see them get big and simple at first while they settle in on a quarterback because the expectations are mounting. They beat Bama, but they lost to Ole Miss. If you do that again this year, you become Ole Miss, and you're being paid to be Bama."

OUTSIDE THE HUDDLE

RACE HORSE AND WORK HORSE? The feeling in College Station is that junior running back Devon Achane could emerge as a Heisman Trophy candidate. Last season, he rushed for 910 yards and nine TDs while averaging seven yards per carry as a backup to Isaiah Spiller. As the featured back, Achane could theoretically double his output. The concern is whether the 5'9", 185-pound Achane can handle an increased workload. "Why wouldn't he?" Jimbo Fisher says. "I think that is decided by the individual. Devon seems to be a guy who can do that. We'll find out."

WHATEVER IT TAKES Though Ainias Smith is the Aggies' best receiver, he may get a lot of action at running back. "We're going find zero (jersey number) his touches," Fisher says. "I know he's a little guy, but that ball ain't heavy. Your best players have to touch the ball as much as they can. We're going to do that." Smith has 90 catches and 12 touchdowns the last two seasons. He started the 2020 season at running back but later shifted to receiver.

AINIAS SMITH

IN A TIGHT SPOT Jalen Wydermyer's decision to enter the NFL draft and Baylor Cupp's transfer to Texas Tech leave the Aggies with little experience at tight end. But first-year A&M tight ends have excelled historically. Among the new recruits, Jake Johnson was the No. 1-rated tight end in the country. Donovan Green was rated No. 4, and Theodor Melin Öhrström, from Sweden, was No. 6.

BACK WHERE IT STARTED Eyebrows might have been raised when Alpharetta, Ga., five-star defensive lineman Lebbeus Overton signed with A&M in April. He's the fourth five-star defensive lineman in the A&M class. His background indicates his decision to choose A&M wasn't that much of a surprise. Overton was born in College Station when his father, Milton, was an A&M associate athletic director from 1999-2009. Milton was also athletic director at Florida A&M from 2015-17 when A&M coach Jimbo Fisher was still at Florida State.

RISING STAR

The Aggies were so deep at defensive end that **TUNMISE ADELEYE** redshirted in 2021 even though he was rated a five-star prospect by some recruiting services. He was named most improved in spring drills. Adeleye is expected to play a prominent role in the pass rush.

2022 TEXAS A&M ROSTER

QUARTERBACKS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
20 Bost, Blake	6-2/195	So.	Groves, TX
21 Daniel, Zach	6-0/185	Jr.	Houston, TX
14 Johnson, Max	6-5/220	Jr.	Athens, GA
13 King, Haynes	6-3/200	So.	Longview, TX
23 Marwill, Colton	5-10/182	Fr.	Tomball, TX
27 Oksnee, Jackson	6-0/185	Fr.	Newport Beach, CA
15 Weigman, Conner	6-2/205	Fr.	Cypress, TX
RUNNING BACKS	**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
6 Achane, Devon	5-9/185	Jr.	Missouri City, TX
24 Crownover, Earnest	6-3/220	Jr.	Grandview, TX
4 Daniels, Amari	5-8/200	So.	Miami, FL
25 DiNota, Anthony	6-0/203	Fr.	Frisco, TX
26 Gonzalez, Payton	5-10/191	Fr.	Jourdanton, TX
34 Johnson Jr., LJ	5-10/205	Fr.	Cypress, TX
29 Mikulec, Joseph	5-9/201	Jr.	The Colony, TX
35 Reaves, Bladen	5-11/200	Jr.	Bryan, TX
RECEIVERS	**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
8 Brown, Yulkeith	5-10/175	So.	Miami, FL
83 Campbell, Ryan	6-2/185	Jr.	New Orleans, LA
84 Holmes, Randell	5-10/190	Fr.	Dallas, TX
16 Jackson, Kenyon	6-6/195	Jr.	Loganville, GA
9 Jones, Hezekiah	6-0/180	Sr.	Stafford, TX
2 Lane, Chase	6-0/190	Jr.	Houston, TX
7 Muhammad, Moose	6-1/195	So.	Charlotte, NC
89 Pendergast, Dylan	5-9/165	Jr.	Pearland, TX
5 Preston, Jalen	6-2/210	Sr.	Manvel, TX
3 Price, Devin	6-3/210	Jr.	College Station, TX
0 Smith, Ainias	5-10/190	Sr.	Missouri City, TX
1 Stewart, Evan	5-11/170	Fr.	Frisco, TX
28 Surber, Caleb	6-0/165	Fr.	Fair Oaks Ranch, TX
TIGHT ENDS	**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
82 Garza, Fernando	6-5/245	Fr.	Katy, TX
19 Johnson, Jake	6-5/225	Fr.	Athens, GA
11 Smith, Blake	6-4/250	So.	Southlake, TX
17 Stowers, Eli	6-4/215	Fr.	Corinth, TX
42 Wright, Max	6-4/260	Sr.	Katy, TX
OFFENSIVE LINEMEN	**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
70 Bankhead, Josh	6-5/325	So.	The Woodlands, TX
52 Chibuzo, Smart	6-4/320	So.	Fresno, TX
76 Fatheree II, Reuben	6-8/320	So.	Richmond, TX
58 Fitts, Jacob	5-10/271	So.	Omaha, TX
61 Foster, Bryce	6-5/325	So.	Katy, TX
72 Jebson, Owen	6-5/290	Fr.	College Station, TX
75 Matthews, Luke	6-4/310	Sr.	Missouri City, TX
74 Ogunbiyi, Aki	6-4/315	So.	Houston, TX
64 Robinson, Layden	6-4/320	Jr.	Manvel, TX
56 Sabra, John	6-2/330	Jr.	Magnolia, TX
66 Spasojevic-Moko, Jordan	6-5/340	So.	Brisbane, Australia
68 Strickland, Remington	6-4/295	Fr.	Sugar Land, TX
53 Trainor, Blake	6-7/330	Jr.	Hallsville, TX
57 Williams, Luke	6-6/295	Fr.	Cedar Park, TX
77 Wykoff, Matthew	6-6/330	Fr.	Magnolia, TX
60 Zuhn III, Trey	6-6/315	Fr.	Fort Collins, CO
DEFENSIVE LINEMEN	**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
30 Adeleye, Tunmise	6-4/295	Fr.	Katy, TX
93 Beltran, Drew	5-11/246	So.	Longview, TX
99 Brownlow-Dindy, Gabriel	6-3/276	Fr.	Lakeland, FL
91 Burris Jr., Marcus	6-4/285	Fr.	Texarkana, TX
87 Crownover, Dametrious	6-6/295	Fr.	Grandview, TX
10 Diggs, Fadil	6-5/260	So.	East Camden, NJ
18 Harris Jr., Donell	6-3/220	So.	Liberty City, FL
13 Harris, Jahzion	6-4/220	Fr.	Staten Island, NY
35 Jackson, McKinnley	6-2/325	Jr.	Lucedale, MS
95 Jackson, Nathan	5-10/264	Fr.	Red Oak, TX
90 Jeudy, Elijah	6-3/295	Fr.	Philadelphia, PA
98 Johnson, Jordan	6-1/300	Jr.	Dallas, TX
55 Jones, Adarious	6-4/300	Jr.	Virginia Beach, VA
8 Lucas, Anthony	6-5/300	Fr.	Scottsdale, AZ
46 Mowry, Braedon	6-4/240	So.	Katy, TX
97 Pepin, Travis	6-1/255	Sr.	Rusk, TX
96 Perry, Grant	6-3/240	So.	Houston, TX
89 Phillips, Joe	6-0/246	Fr.	Grand Prairie, TX
34 Raikes, Isaiah	6-1/320	Jr.	Woodbury, NJ
15 Regis, Albert	6-1/305	Fr.	La Porte, TX
5 Turner, Shemar	6-4/285	So.	DeSoto, TX
LINEBACKERS	**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
45 Cooper, Edgerrin	6-3/220	So.	Covington, LA
25 Harris, Ish	6-2/200	Fr.	Pilot Point, TX
49 Hummel, Houston	6-4/225	So.	Dallas, TX
23 Lee Jr., Tarian	6-2/230	Jr.	Tallahassee, FL
52 Merrick, Andrew	6-2/230	So.	Dallas, TX
24 Russell Jr., Chris	6-2/235	Sr.	Dyersburg, TN
51 Tullos, Kason	6-2/215	Fr.	Spring, TX
54 Waddy, Jalen	6-0/217	Jr.	Houston, TX
32 White Jr., Andre	6-3/230	Sr.	Harrisburg, PA
DEFENSIVE BACKS	**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
1 Anderson, Bryce	5-11/191	Fr.	Beaumont, TX
7 Chappell, Tyreek	5-11/185	So.	Philadelphia, PA
81 Fitzgerald, Kyle	6-4/200	Sr.	San Antonio, TX
39 Garcia, Cade	5-8/185	Jr.	Fort Worth, TX
16 George, Brian	6-2/190	Sr.	South Bay, FL
20 Gilbert, Jardin	6-1/185	So.	White Castle, LA
19 Groves-Killebrew, Marquis	6-0/180	Fr.	Kennesaw, GA
11 Harmon, Deuce	5-10/200	So.	Corinth, TX
2 Harris, Denver	5-11/175	Fr.	Houston, TX
41 Hughes, Avery	6-0/180	So.	Sugar Land, TX
27 Johnson, Antonio	6-3/200	Jr.	East St. Louis, IL
17 Jones, Jaylon	6-2/205	Jr.	Cibolo, TX
0 Jones, Myles	6-4/190	Sr.	Magnolia, TX
33 Kerr, Jarred	5-11/173	Fr.	Lexington, TX
29 Mathews, Samuel	6-3/210	Sr.	League City, TX
31 Merrell, Caleb	6-1/195	Jr.	Bryan, TX
21 Moten, Josh	6-0/165	So.	Waldorf, MD
36 Pinkard, Dion	5-10/190	Jr.	The Woodlands, TX
26 Richardson, Demani	6-1/210	Sr.	Waxahachie, TX
42 Robinson, Kent	5-10/165	Fr.	Grand Prairie, TX
38 Smoot, Will	5-10/180	Jr.	Houston, TX
87 Steptoe, Keith	5-11/185	So.	Navasota, TX
47 Taing, Heng	5-9/155	So.	Mesquite, TX
9 Taylor, Bobby	6-0/180	Fr.	Katy, TX
43 Zettler, Alex	6-0/205	Sr.	West Jordan, UT
SPECIALISTS	**HT/WT**	**CL**	**HOMETOWN**
51 Able, Connor (LS)	6-3/215	Fr.	Houston, TX
94 Bhatia, Drake (K)	5-7/150	So.	Houston, TX
47 Bond, Randy (K)	5-10/190	So.	Plano, TX
12 Choate, Connor (LS)	6-1/200	Sr.	Coppell, TX
95 Constantinou, Nik (P)	6-3/230	Jr.	Melbourne, Australia
36 Davis, Caden (K)	6-3/200	Jr.	Coppell, TX
48 Graham, Jacob (LS)	5-11/220	So.	Houston, TX
38 Guerrieri, Alan (P/K)	6-0/205	Jr.	College Station, TX
50 Townsend, Garrett (LS)	5-11/220	Jr.	Houston, TX

Tim Clark

2022 **SIGNEES**

When a recruiting class is ranked the best ever, it's safe to assume that all needs were met. That's certainly the case for the class signed by Texas A&M. The Aggies' 30-member class includes eight 5-star recruits, 15 players rated among the nation's top 5 at their position and 18 of the top 100 overall prospects as ranked by 247Sports. The class was largely assembled in December, enhanced in February and topped off in April when five-star defensive lineman Lebbeus Overton chose A&M over Georgia, Oregon and Alabama.

Defensive line, receivers and quarterback were the primary needs. Fisher filled them with astonishing success. The best defensive line haul in the country featured four players rated among the ESPN's top seven overall prospects — No. 1 Walter Nolen, No. 3 Gabriel Brownlow-Dindy, No. 7 Shemar Stewart and No. 6 Overton.

Fisher also added five-star Connor Weigman, the nation's premier quarterback prospect per ESPN, and brought in 2021 LSU starter Max Johnson from the transfer portal.

They will throw to five-star receivers Evan Stewart and Chris Marshall, the second- and third-ranked receivers nationally. No. 1-ranked tight end prospect Jake Johnson, Max's younger brother, flipped from LSU to A&M. He joined Donovan Green, the No. 4 tight end prospect, and Theodor Melin Ohrstrom, a four-star from Sweden.

The Aggies also landed five-star cornerback Denver Harris and safeties Jacoby Mathews, Deyon "Smoke" Bouie and Bryce Anderson, all of whom were ranked among the nation's top eight at the position.

BY POSITION

Defensive Linemen	8
Defensive Backs	7
Offensive Linemen	4
Tight Ends	3
Wide Receivers	3
Linebackers	2
Quarterbacks	1
Running Backs	1
Specialists	1

BY STATE

Texas	16
Georgia	4
Florida	2
Louisiana	2
Washington	2
Arizona	1
Pennsylvania	1
Tennessee	1
Sweden	1

RECRUIT SPOTLIGHT

EVAN STEWART

WR • Frisco, TX

According to multiple recruiting services, Texas A&M hit a home run with the signing of receiver Evan Stewart.

The analogy might be flawed. Stewart did not excel in baseball, though he probably could. He seems to excel in everything else.

He was a renowned soccer prospect before leaving the game after his sophomore year in high school. He also was a track and field champion in the long jump and sprints.

He shines brightest in football, though.

"I want to be a football player. That always comes first," Stewart told reporters last spring. "I want to go to the NFL. I want to live that life."

He appears headed in that direction. As a junior at Liberty High School in Frisco, Texas, he averaged 19.8 yards on 46 receptions and hauled in nine touchdowns. He played only three games in his senior season but hauled in 22 passes for 487 yards and three scores.

"He's great with the ball in his hands, he can get the deep ball and do all the things you've got to do," Texas A&M head coach Jimbo Fisher says. "What's got me the most is his ability to have an urgency to be great quickly and not wait."

Name	Pos	Ht/Wt	Hometown	247	ESPN	Rivals	Nat. Rank
Bryce Anderson	S	5-11/191	Beaumont, TX	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	77
Smoke Bouie	S	5-11/185	Bainbridge, GA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	68
Gabriel Brownlow-Dindy	DL	6-3/276	Lakeland, FL	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	16
Kam Dewberry	OL	6-4/313	Humble, TX	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	64
Hunter Erb	OT	6-6/325	Haslet, TX	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	274
Donovan Green	TE	6-4/235	Dickinson, TX	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	105
Marquis Groves-Killebrew	CB	6-0/180	Kennesaw, GA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	114
Denver Harris	CB	5-11/175	Houston, TX	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	23
Ish Harris	LB	6-2/200	Pilot Point, TX	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	378
Martrell Harris Jr.	LB	6-2/215	The Woodlands, TX	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	273
Jake Johnson	TE	6-5/225	Athens, GA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	95
Jarred Kerr	S	5-11/173	Lexington, TX	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	372
Anthony Lucas	DL	6-5/300	Scottsdale, AZ	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	59
Chris Marshall	WR	6-3/195	Missouri City, TX	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	25
Jacoby Mathews	S	6-2/193	Ponchatoula, LA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	39
Theodor Melin Öhrström	TE	6-6/245	Stockholm, Sweden	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	213
Ethan Moczulski	K	5-11/185	Spokane, WA	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,614
Le'Veon Moss	RB	6-0/190	Baton Rouge, LA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	82
Mark Nabou	OL	6-4/330	Seattle, WA	★★★	★★★	★★★	504
Walter Nolen	DL	6-4/325	Powell, TN	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	2
Lebbeus Overton	DL	6-5/265	Alpharetta, GA	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	18
Jadon Scarlett	DL	6-3/265	Argyle, TX	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	427
Evan Stewart	WR	5-11/170	Frisco, TX	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	11
Shemar Stewart	DL	6-6/272	Miami Gardens, FL	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	9
Malick Sylla	EDGE	6-6/230	Katy, TX	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	94
Bobby Taylor	CB	6-0/180	Katy, TX	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	190
Noah Thomas	WR	6-5/180	League City, TX	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	315
Conner Weigman	QB	6-2/205	Cypress, TX	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	22
Enai White	EDGE	6-5/230	Philadelphia, PA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	47
PJ Williams	OT	6-4/265	Dickinson, TX	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	69

SUN BELT PREVIEW

EAST DIVISION

PREDICTED ORDER OF FINISH

1	APPALACHIAN STATE **MOUNTAINEERS**	9-4, 6-2
2	COASTAL CAROLINA **CHANTICLEERS**	9-3, 6-2
3	GEORGIA STATE **PANTHERS**	7-5, 6-2
4	MARSHALL **THUNDERING HERD**	8-4, 5-3
5	OLD DOMINION **MONARCHS**	5-7, 4-4
6	JAMES MADISON **DUKES**	6-5, 4-4
7	GEORGIA SOUTHERN **EAGLES**	4-8, 2-6

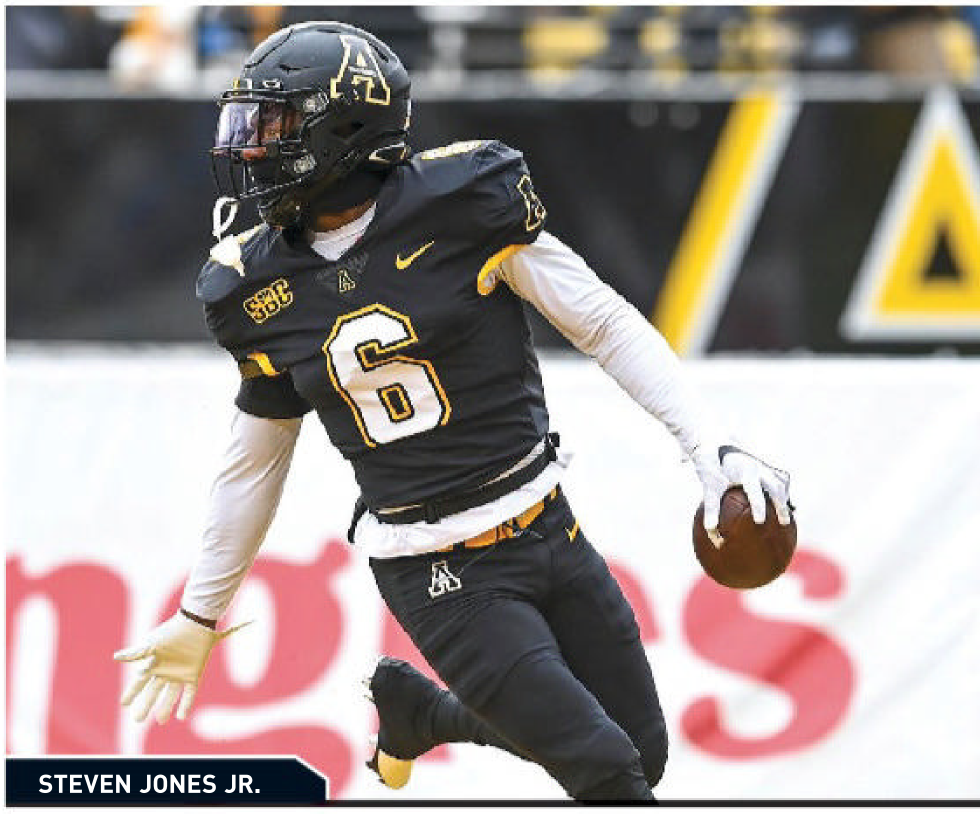
WEST DIVISION

PREDICTED ORDER OF FINISH

1	LOUISIANA **RAGIN' CAJUNS**	8-5, 5-3
2	SOUTH ALABAMA **JAGUARS**	6-6, 4-4
3	TROY **TROJANS**	6-6, 4-4
4	SOUTHERN MISS **GOLDEN EAGLES**	5-7, 4-4
5	TEXAS STATE **BOBCATS**	4-8, 2-6
6	ARKANSAS STATE **RED WOLVES**	4-8, 2-6
7	ULM **WARHAWKS**	3-9, 2-6

Games to Watch

Virginia Tech at Old Dominion, Sept. 2
North Carolina at Appalachian State, Sept. 3
Coastal Carolina at Georgia State, Sept. 22
Georgia Southern at Georgia State, Oct. 8
Louisiana at Marshall, Oct. 12
Georgia State at Appalachian State, Oct. 19
Marshall at James Madison, Oct. 22
Coastal Carolina at Marshall, Oct. 29
Appalachian State at Coastal Carolina, Nov. 3
Troy at Louisiana, Nov. 5
Appalachian State at Marshall, Nov. 12
Georgia State at Marshall, Nov. 26



STEVEN JONES JR.

Appalachian State Athletics

Sun Belt Championship:
Appalachian State over Louisiana

Recruiting by School

1. Marshall
2. Arkansas State
3. Coastal Carolina
4. Southern Miss
5. Appalachian State
6. Georgia State
7. South Alabama
8. Old Dominion
9. Georgia Southern
10. Louisiana
11. Troy
12. Texas State
13. ULM
14. James Madison

ALL-SUN BELT TEAM

FIRST-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	**Grayson McCall**	Jr.	Coastal Carolina
RB	**Rasheen Ali**	So.	Marshall
RB	**Nate Noel**	Jr.	Appalachian State
AP	**Chris Smith**	Jr.	Louisiana
WR	**Ali Jennings III**	Jr.	Old Dominion
WR	**Kris Thornton**	Sr.	James Madison
TE	**Zack Kuntz**	Jr.	Old Dominion
C	**Malik Sumter**	Sr.	Georgia State
OL	**Cooper Hodges**	Sr.	Appalachian State
OL	**Willie Lampkin**	Jr.	Coastal Carolina
OL	**Austin Stidham**	Sr.	Troy
OL	**Dalton Cooper**	So.	Texas State

FIRST-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	**Josaiah Stewart**	So.	Coastal Carolina
DL	**Javon Solomon**	So.	Troy
DL	**Zi'Yon Hill**	Sr.	Louisiana
DL	**Will Choloh**	Sr.	Troy
LB	**Kivon Bennett**	Sr.	Arkansas State
LB	**Carlton Martial**	Sr.	Troy
LB	**Abraham Beauplan**	Sr.	Marshall
LB	**Nick Hampton**	Sr.	Appalachian State
CB	**Steven Jones Jr.**	Sr.	Appalachian State
CB	**Darrell Luter Jr.**	Jr.	South Alabama
S	**Antavious Lane**	Jr.	Georgia State
S	**Keith Gallmon Jr.**	Jr.	South Alabama

FIRST-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	**Calum Sutherland**	Sr.	ULM	P	**Rhys Byrns**	Sr.	Louisiana
KR	**Camron Harrell**	Sr.	Southern Miss	PR	**Johnnie Lang**	Sr.	Arkansas State

SECOND-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	**Chase Brice**	Sr.	Appalachian State
RB	**Tucker Gregg**	Sr.	Georgia State
RB	**Camerun Peoples**	Sr.	Appalachian State
AP	**Blake Watson**	Jr.	Old Dominion
WR	**Tez Johnson**	So.	Troy
WR	**Corey Gammage**	Jr.	Marshall
WR	**Te'Vailance Hunt**	Sr.	Arkansas State
C	**Logan Langemeier**	Sr.	Georgia Southern
OL	**Anderson Hardy**	Sr.	Appalachian State
OL	**Khalil Crowder**	Sr.	Georgia Southern
OL	**AJ Gillie**	So.	Louisiana
OL	**Nick Saldiveri**	Jr.	Old Dominion

SECOND-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	**Richard Jibunor**	Jr.	Troy
DL	**Andre Jones**	Sr.	Louisiana
DL	**Caleb Thomas**	Sr.	ULM
DL	**Koby Cumberlander**	Sr.	Marshall
LB	**Trey Cobb**	Sr.	Appalachian State
LB	**Blake Carroll**	Sr.	Georgia State
LB	**Eli Neal**	Jr.	Marshall
LB	**Diamonte Tucker-Dorsey**	Sr.	James Madison
CB	**Derrick Canteen**	Jr.	Georgia Southern
CB	**D'Jordan Strong**	Sr.	Coastal Carolina
S	**R'Tarriun Johnson**	Sr.	Old Dominion
S	**Anthony Wilson**	Jr.	Georgia Southern

SECOND-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	**Seth Keller**	Jr.	Texas State	P	**Anthony Beck II**	Sr.	Georgia Southern
KR	**LaMareon James**	So.	Old Dominion	PR	**Eric Garror**	Sr.	Louisiana

THIRD-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	**Darren Grainger**	Sr.	Georgia State
RB	**Reese White**	Sr.	Coastal Carolina
RB	**Percy Agyei-Obese**	Sr.	James Madison
AP	**Frank Gore Jr.**	So.	Southern Miss
WR	**Boogie Knight**	Sr.	ULM
WR	**Jalen Wayne**	Jr.	South Alabama
WR	**Jason Brownlee**	Sr.	Southern Miss
C	**Russell Baker**	Sr.	Texas State
OL	**Kyle Hergel**	Jr.	Texas State
OL	**Pat Bartlett**	Sr.	Georgia State
OL	**Antwine Loper**	Sr.	Coastal Carolina
OL	**Jake Andrews**	Jr.	Troy

THIRD-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	**Wy'Kevious Thomas**	Fr.	South Alabama
DL	**Jordon Earle**	Sr.	Appalachian State
DL	**Jerrod Clark**	Sr.	Coastal Carolina
DL	**Thomas Gore**	Jr.	Georgia State
LB	**Hayes Maples**	Jr.	Southern Miss
LB	**Zack Woodard**	Sr.	ULM
LB	**Jordan Veneziale**	Sr.	Georgia State
LB	**Jordan Revels**	Jr.	Texas State
CB	**Eric Garror**	Sr.	Louisiana
CB	**Steven Gilmore**	Sr.	Marshall
S	**Ryan Huff**	Sr.	Appalachian State
S	**TJ Harris**	Sr.	Troy

THIRD-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	**Diego Guajardo**	So.	South Alabama	P	**Mason Hunt**	Sr.	Southern Miss
KR	**Chris Smith**	Jr.	Louisiana	PR	**Natrone Brooks**	Sr.	Southern Miss

2022 BOWL PROJECTIONS

Boca Raton Bowl
Coastal Carolina vs. UCF

Camellia Bowl
South Alabama vs. Miami (Ohio)

Frisco Football Classic
Louisiana vs. UTEP

LendingTree Bowl
Marshall vs. Kent State

Myrtle Beach Bowl
Georgia State vs. Memphis

New Orleans Bowl
Appalachian State vs. UAB

2021 STANDINGS

East	SBC	Overall
Appalachian State	7-1	10-4
Georgia State	6-2	8-5
Coastal Carolina	6-2	11-2
Troy	3-5	5-7
Georgia Southern	2-6	3-9
West	**SBC**	**Overall**
Louisiana	8-0	13-1
Texas State	3-5	4-8
ULM	2-6	4-8
South Alabama	2-6	5-7
Arkansas State	1-7	2-10

2021 BOWL RESULTS

Cure Bowl
Coastal Carolina 47, Northern Illinois 41

Boca Raton Bowl
WKU 59, Appalachian State 38

New Orleans Bowl
Louisiana 36, Marshall 21

Camellia Bowl
Georgia State 51, Ball State 20

APPALACHIAN STATE MOUNTAINEERS

National Forecast: 48 • Sun Belt East Prediction: 1 • Projected Record: 9-4, 6-2 Sun Belt

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	North Carolina
Sept. 10	at Texas A&M
Sept. 17	Troy
Sept. 24	James Madison
Oct. 1	The Citadel
Oct. 8	at Texas State
Oct. 19	Georgia State
Oct. 29	Robert Morris
Nov. 3	at Coastal Carolina
Nov. 12	at Marshall
Nov. 19	Old Dominion
Nov. 26	at Georgia Southern

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 10-4, 7-1 SBC

Sept. 2	vs. East Carolina #	W	33-19
Sept. 11	at Miami (Fla.)	L	23-25
Sept. 18	Elon	W	44-10
Sept. 23	Marshall	W	31-30
Oct. 2	at Georgia State	W	45-16
Oct. 12	at Louisiana	L	13-41
Oct. 20	Coastal Carolina	W	30-27
Oct. 30	ULM	W	59-28
Nov. 6	at Arkansas State	W	48-14
Nov. 13	South Alabama	W	31-7
Nov. 20	at Troy	W	45-7
Nov. 27	Georgia Southern	W	27-3
Dec. 4	at Louisiana %	L	16-24
Dec. 18	vs. WKU &	L	38-59

#Charlotte %SBC Championship &Boca Raton Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SB	NATIONAL
Scoring	34.5 ppg	2	22
Rushing	192.2 ypg	4	33
Passing	249.1 ypg	4	54
Total	441.3 ypg	2	30

DEFENSE	PER GAME	SB	NATIONAL
Scoring	22.1 ppg	3	30
Rushing	125.7 ypg	1	25
Passing	222.0 ypg	5	58
Total	347.7 ypg	4	33

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	SB	NATIONAL
-4	-0.29	7	91

STAT CORNER

47.6%

App State succeeded on 47.6 percent of passing attempts, the sixth-highest rate in the FBS.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Chase Brice, 390-242-3,337-11, 27 TDs
Rushing: Nate Noel, 199 att., 1,126 yds., 4 TDs
Receiving: Christian Wells, 12 rec., 243 yds., 2 TDs
Tackles: Trey Cobb, 75
Sacks: Nick Hampton, 11.0
Interceptions: Steven Jones Jr., 5

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Shawn Clark
Record at School: 20-7 (2+ years)
Career Record: 20-7 (2+ years)
Offensive Coordinator: Kevin Barbay
Defensive Coordinator: Dale Jones
Location: Boone, NC
Stadium: Kidd Brewer Stadium (30,000)

OFFENSE The Mountaineers are primed for another potent scoring season with seven starters returning on offense. Quarterback Chase Brice proved a far better thrower during his first season at Appalachian State than he was during his failed season at Duke in 2020. The one-time backup to Trevor Lawrence at Clemson completed 62.1 percent of his passes, firing 27 touchdowns against 11 interceptions with the Mountaineers last season.

Of course, he threw to three senior receivers in 2021, and all three are gone. Brice does have a returning starter at tight end in Henry Pearson.

App State will have a powerful rushing attack at its disposal with a pair of veteran running backs in Nate Noel and Camerun Peoples. Essentially co-starters a year ago, they combined to rush for 2,052 yards and 18 touchdowns. Four starters are back along the offensive line as well, setting the Mountaineers up for success via both the pass and the run.

The offense might be asked to win some shootouts this season, and App State has the weapons for the task.

DEFENSE The Mountaineers must replace five of their top six tacklers. Among the six returning starters are senior linebackers Trey Cobb (75 tackles) and Nick Hampton. Third on the team with 69 tackles last season, Hampton looks like a sure bet to increase that total.

Cornerback Steven Jones Jr. is sticking around for his super senior year. He intercepted five passes last season, returning three for touchdowns.

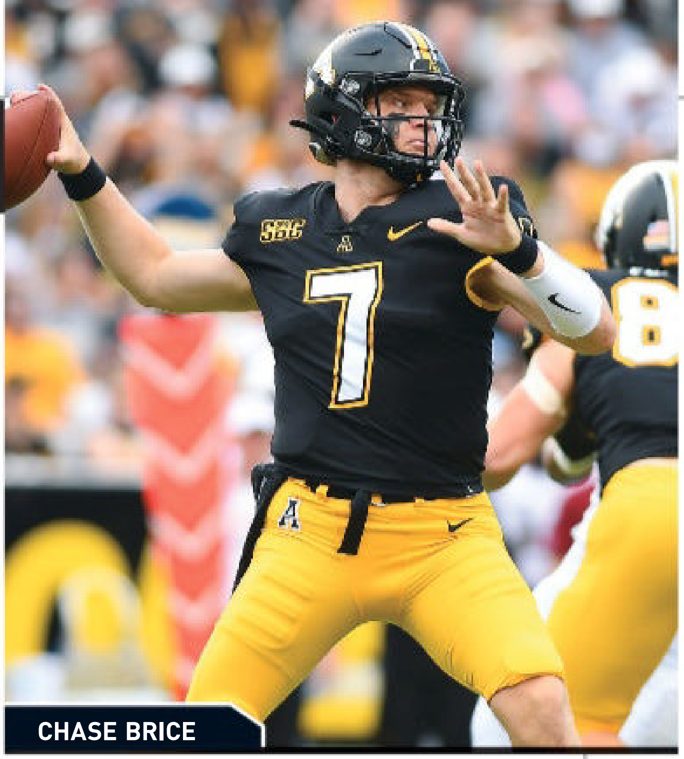
Nose tackle Jordon Earle, a senior, anchors the middle of the defensive line. App State will give senior Hansky Paillant significant snaps at defensive end after he played in 26 games as a reserve over the last two seasons. The Mountaineers will also need production from sophomore defensive end Deshawn McKnight.

Like Jones, free safety Ryan Huff returns in the defensive backfield as a super senior.

SPECIALISTS Chandler Staton's five-season run as App State's placekicker is finally done, leaving sophomore Michael Hughes in line to handle the duties. Staton's holder the last three seasons, super senior Clayton Howell, will handle the punting duties, just as he did in 2018 when he was a freshman All-American after averaging 43.6 yards per attempt.

FINAL ANALYSIS The Mountaineers have plenty of talent and experience on offense to make their usual challenge for the Sun Belt championship. While the defense has more question marks, App State has enough former reserves with experience who should be ready to handle expanded roles as new starters.

App State jumps into the season with two big games, as North Carolina comes to Boone before the Mountaineers play at Texas A&M. The Mountaineers' annual Sun Belt grudge match with Coastal Carolina is on the road this season on Nov. 3. Another season in the Top 25 could be in the offing for one of the Group of Five's most consistent programs.



CHASE BRICE

Appalachian State Athletics

> "You're gonna see stretch and split zone on offense, and you're going to see a defense that's sound fundamentally and doesn't overcomplicate. Always an easy pick to win the league."
>
> —An opposing Sun Belt assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Santana Hopper, DL, Shelby, NC	★★★
2	Donovan Spellman, Edge, Clayton, NC	★★★
3	James Edwards, CB, Clewiston, FL	★★★
4	DJ Burks, ATH, Maryville, TN	★★★
5	Markus Clark, DL, Hoover, AL	★★★
6	Omari Philyaw, CB, Cornelius, NC	★★★
7	Kanen Hamlett, ATH, Madison, AL	★★★
8	Ryan Burger, QB, Myrtle Beach, SC	★★★
9	Derrell Farrar, LB, Loganville, GA	★★★
10	Josiah Wyatt, DL, Buford, GA	★★★

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

WR		Kaedin Robinson (So.)	22	Dalton Stroman (Fr.)
WR	16	Christian Wells (Jr.)	13	Christan Horn (Jr.)
WR	17	Dashaun Davis (Jr.)	82	Jaquan Lowman (Fr.)
LT	**74**	**Anderson Hardy (Sr.)**	63	Jayden Ramsey (Fr.)
LG	**75**	**Damion Daley (Sr.)**	55	Seth Williams (So.)
C	53	Troy Everett (Fr.)	66	Luke Smith (Jr.)
RG	**68**	**Isaiah Helms (Sr.)**	73	Jaden Lindsay (Fr.)
RT	**70**	**Cooper Hodges (Sr.)**	78	Craig McFarland (Jr.)
TE	**88**	**Henry Pearson (Sr.)**	87	Eli Wilson (So.)
QB	**7**	**Chase Brice (Sr.)**		Brady McBride (Jr.)
RB	**20**	**Nate Noel (Jr.)**	6	Camerun Peoples (Sr.)

DEFENSE (6)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	48	Deshawn McKnight (So.)	50	DeAndre Dingle-Prince (Jr.)
NT	**99**	**Jordon Earle (Sr.)**	93	KaRon White (Fr.)
DE	43	Hansky Paillant (Sr.)	36	Kevon Haigler (So.)
OLB	**31**	**Nick Hampton (Sr.)**	35	Jalen McLeod (Jr.)
ILB	**7**	**Trey Cobb (Sr.)**	34	Jourdan Heilig (Sr.)
ILB	51	Tyler Bird (Sr.)	56	Kyle Arnholt (Fr.)
OLB	**29**	**Brendan Harrington (Sr.)**	28	KeSean Brown (Sr.)
CB	**6**	**Steven Jones Jr. (Sr.)**		Omari Philyaw (Fr.)
CB	0	Milan Tucker (Jr.)		Ethan Johnson (Fr.)
SS	27	Ronald Clarke (So.)	4	Nick Ross (Sr.)
FS	**21**	**Ryan Huff (Sr.)**		Zion Keith (Sr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	37	Michael Hughes (So.)	KR	0	Milan Tucker (Jr.)
P	30	Clayton Howell (Sr.)	PR	6	Steven Jones Jr. (Sr.)

COASTAL CAROLINA CHANTICLEERS

National Forecast: 49 • Sun Belt East Prediction: 2 • Projected Record: 9-3, 6-2 Sun Belt

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Army
Sept. 10	Gardner-Webb
Sept. 17	Buffalo
Sept. 22	at Georgia State
Oct. 1	Georgia Southern
Oct. 8	at ULM
Oct. 15	Old Dominion
Oct. 29	at Marshall
Nov. 3	Appalachian State
Nov. 12	Southern Miss
Nov. 19	at Virginia
Nov. 26	at James Madison

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 11-2, 6-2 SBC

Sept. 2	The Citadel	W	52-14
Sept. 10	Kansas	W	49-22
Sept. 18	at Buffalo	W	28-25
Sept. 25	UMass	W	53-3
Oct. 2	ULM	W	59-6
Oct. 7	at Arkansas State	W	52-20
Oct. 20	at Appalachian St.	L	27-30
Oct. 28	Troy	W	35-28
Nov. 6	at Georgia Southern	W	28-8
Nov. 13	Georgia State	L	40-42
Nov. 20	Texas State	W	35-21
Nov. 26	at South Alabama (ot)	W	27-21
Dec. 17	vs. Northern Illinois #	W	47-41

#Cure Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SB	NATIONAL
Scoring	40.9 ppg	1	5
Rushing	228.8 ypg	1	6
Passing	265.9 ypg	2	28
Total	494.7 ypg	1	5

DEFENSE	PER GAME	SB	NATIONAL
Scoring	21.6 ppg	2	25
Rushing	149.1 ypg	6	61
Passing	190.3 ypg	2	16
Total	339.4 ypg	3	25

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	SB	NATIONAL
+2	+0.15	6	53

STAT CORNER

0.485

Coastal Carolina posted the nation's best passing explosiveness, averaging 0.485 EPA/pass, and the nation's best passing efficiency with a 56.3 percent success rate.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Grayson McCall, 241-176-2,873-3, 27 TDs
Rushing: Braydon Bennett, 74 att., 636 yds., 7 TDs
Receiving: Braydon Bennett, 24 rec., 295 yds., 2 TDs
Tackles: Josaiah Stewart, 43
Sacks: Josaiah Stewart, 12.5
Interceptions: Lance Boykin, 1

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Jamey Chadwell
Record at School: 30-19 (4 years)
Career Record: 90-54 (12 years)
Offensive Coordinators: Newland Isaac, Willy Korn
Defensive Coordinator: Chad Staggs
Location: Conway, SC
Stadium: Brooks Stadium (21,000)

OFFENSE Much of the story for Coastal Carolina in 2022 will be what the team lost. But the return of two-time reigning Sun Belt Conference Player of the Year Grayson McCall at quarterback keeps CCU relevant on a national level. McCall set an FBS record for passing efficiency at 207.65. For his career, McCall has completed 71 percent of his passes for 5,386 yards and 54 touchdowns with just six interceptions.

The coaching staff behind head coach Jamey Chadwell's spread option offense is still intact, but there will be a number of new pieces to incorporate.

The Chanticleers have a couple of dangerous running backs in sophomore Braden Bennett and senior Reese White. Bennett has big-play ability and averaged 8.6 yards per carry while gaining 636 yards on the ground with seven rushing touchdowns. The speedy and shifty White has rushed for 1,160 yards and has 18 TDs in his career.

The Chants lost 161 receptions, 2,645 receiving yards and 24 receiving TDs between departed tight end Isaiah Likely (a fourth-round NFL Draft pick) and wide receivers Jaivon Heiligh and Kameron Brown. So McCall has to find new targets, including fifth-year senior Sam Pinckney, a Georgia State transfer.

Two starting offensive linemen return in super senior tackle Antwine Loper and guard/center Willie Lampkin, who have a combined 54 starts.

DEFENSE CCU must replace nine starters on defense, but the Chants do return some impact players on the line and in the secondary. As a true freshman, defensive end Josaiah Stewart was fifth in the nation with 12.5 sacks while also recording three forced fumbles. Stewart, who played at 6'2", 245 last year, will likely get bigger, faster and stronger in his first offseason in the CCU strength program. Nose tackle Jerrod Clark stood out in spring practices and is expected to be a stalwart of the defensive line.

Two-time first-team All-Sun Belt cornerback D'Jordan Strong returns to a secondary that will also feature super senior cornerback Lance Boykin. Strong's five interceptions in 2020 were tied for fifth nationally.

At linebacker, experienced backups JT Killen and Shane Bruce appear ready to step into starting roles, and transfers Jahmar Brown (South Carolina) and Adrian Hope (Furman) will bolster the position group.

SPECIALISTS Redshirt freshman Liam Gray is expected to handle the placekicking duties. In 2021, he hit a 46-yard field goal and made 12-of-13 extra points. True freshman Evan Crenshaw is expected to win the punting job. Manny Stokes Jr. and Aaron Bedgood are among the options on returns.

FINAL ANALYSIS The Chanticleers have burst onto the national college football scene with a pair of 11-win seasons, a conference championship and a bowl win over the past two years. If McCall can stay healthy, the Chants figure to again be one of the top teams in the Sun Belt, but they also have a lot of holes to fill.

GRAYSON MCCALL

James Gilbert/Getty Images

> "If [Grayson] McCall stays healthy, they're going to be good to great. Everything runs through that guy. He can take over a game and change their entire team."
>
> —An opposing Sun Belt assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	De'Andre Coleman, WR, Hueytown, AL	★★★
2	Matthew McDoom, ATH, Winter Garden, FL	★★★
3	Bryce Archie, QB, Powder Springs, GA	★★★
4	Rian Black, WR, Rockledge, FL	★★★
5	Tray Brown, LB, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	★★★
6	Dontrell Jackson Jr., QB, Chicago, IL	★★★
7	Jerrod Cameron Jr., CB, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	★★★
8	Elijah Hopkins, ATH, Ocala, FL	★★★
9	Corey Warren, DL, Hoover, AL	★★★
10	Allen Henry, DL, West Memphis, AR*	★★★

*junior college transfer

DEPTH CHART

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

OFFENSE (4)				
WR	15	Sam Pinckney (Sr.)	3	Aaron Bedgood (Jr.)
WR	8	Tyson Mobley (Jr.)	14	Jared Brown (Fr.)
LT	56	Donnell Wilson (Jr.)	75	Mason Bowers (So.)
LG	66	Will McDonald (Jr.)	65	Dillon Luther (Jr.)
C	**57**	**Willie Lampkin (Jr.)**	78	Tyler Wagner (So.)
RG	69	Willie Moise (So.)	53	Kip Green (So.)
RT	**72**	**Antwine Loper (Sr.)**	64	Zovon Lindsay (Jr.)
TE	85	Xavier Gravette (Sr.)	86	TJ Ivy Jr. (Sr.)
QB	**10**	**Grayson McCall (Jr.)**	12	Bryce Carpenter (Sr.)
RB	**1**	**Braydon Bennett (So.)**	27	CJ Beasley (So.)
RB	2	Reese White (Sr.)	13	Max Balthazar (Fr.)

DEFENSE (2)				
DE	91	Emmanuel Johnson Jr.)	3	Ja'Quon Griffin (Sr.)
NT	**15**	**Jerrod Clark (Sr.)**	5	Travis Geiger Jr. (Sr.)
DT	99	Kennedy Roberts (Sr.)	90	Rolan Wooden II (Sr.)
BAN	0	Josaiah Stewart (So.)	81	Adrian Hope (Sr.)
ILB	1	Shane Bruce (So.)	39	Tré Pinkney (Jr.)
ILB	21	JT Killen (Jr.)	45	Mason Shelton (So.)
SPUR	8	Jahmar Brown (Jr.)	26	Jairan Parker (Sr.)
CB	7	Lance Boykin (Sr.)	9	Manny Stokes Jr. (Jr.)
CB	**2**	**D'Jordan Strong (Sr.)**	23	Jacob Proche (Sr.)
S	10	Tavyn Jackson (Sr.)	18	Tobias Fletcher (So.)
S	19	Dre Pinckney (Fr.)	33	Joshua Madison (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	31	Liam Gray (Fr.)	**KR**	9	Manny Stokes Jr. (Jr.)
P	22	Evan Crenshaw (Fr.)	**PR**	3	Aaron Bedgood (Jr.)

GEORGIA SOUTHERN EAGLES

National Forecast: 109 • Sun Belt East Prediction: 7 • Projected Record: 4-8, 2-6 Sun Belt

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Morgan State
Sept. 10	at Nebraska
Sept. 17	at UAB
Sept. 24	Ball State
Oct. 1	at Coastal Carolina
Oct. 8	at Georgia State
Oct. 15	James Madison
Oct. 22	at Old Dominion
Nov. 5	South Alabama
Nov. 10	at Louisiana
Nov. 19	Marshall
Nov. 26	Appalachian State

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 3-9, 2-6 SBC

Sept. 4	Gardner-Webb	W	30-25
Sept. 11	at Florida Atlantic	L	6-38
Sept. 18	at Arkansas	L	10-45
Sept. 25	Louisiana	L	20-28
Oct. 2	Arkansas State	W	59-33
Oct. 9	at Troy	L	24-27
Oct. 14	at South Alabama	L	14-41
Oct. 30	Georgia State	L	14-21
Nov. 6	Coastal Carolina	L	8-28
Nov. 13	at Texas State	W	38-30
Nov. 20	BYU	L	17-34
Nov. 27	at Appalachian St.	L	3-27

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SB	NATIONAL
Scoring	20.2 ppg	10	115
Rushing	193.5 ypg	3	32
Passing	147.1 ypg	10	124
Total	340.6 ypg	8	107

DEFENSE	PER GAME	SB	NATIONAL
Scoring	31.4 ppg	7	101
Rushing	152.3 ypg	7	65
Passing	289.5 ypg	10	126
Total	441.8 ypg	8	110

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	SB	NATIONAL
-7	-0.58	9	108

STAT CORNER

37.5%

Georgia Southern's defense got off the field effectively on third downs last season, holding opponents to a 37.5 percent success rate (ranking 23rd nationally) and to a 39.9 percent rushing success rate overall.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Cam Ransom, 83-39-494-0, 3 TDs
Rushing: Gerald Green, 75 att., 423 yds., 5 TDs
Receiving: Khaleb Hood, 41 rec., 497 yds., 0 TDs
Tackles: Anthony Wilson, 78
Sacks: Justin Ellis, 5.0
Interceptions: 3 players tied with 1

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Clay Helton
Record at School: First Season
Career Record: 46-24 (7+ years)
Offensive Coordinator: Bryan Ellis
Defensive Coordinator: Will Harris
Location: Statesboro, GA
Stadium: Paulson Stadium (25,000)

OFFENSE Hiring Clay Helton as head coach marks a shift away from Georgia Southern's triple-option tradition toward a spread-style scheme. Such changes are often painful, particularly at quarterback and offensive line. That's why QB Justin Tomlin, who started seven games last year, hit the transfer portal. The Eagles brought in veteran Buffalo transfer Kyle Vantrease (4,755 career passing yards) to compete with returning sophomores Cam Ransom and Connor Cigelske.

Offensive line coach Richard Owens will have his work cut out with a unit that returns four starters but has little experience blocking in a scheme that will try to aggressively pass the ball downfield. The Eagles have shown strong weight room gains — Caleb Kelly, for example, was up more than 30 pounds in winter conditioning after playing tackle in the 250 range last season — but that group's development will be the fulcrum for any success (or lack thereof) during the scheme transition.

The Eagles will likely lean on speedy receiver Khaleb Hood (12.1 ypr) and a deep running back room that will welcome the return of three-time all conference honoree J.D. King, who played just four games in 2021, preserving a redshirt as he recovered from a major knee injury.

DEFENSE Given how poorly the Eagles performed against the pass last season, it made perfect sense for Helton to build his defensive staff around coordinator Will Harris, who coached one of the top secondaries in the country at Washington. Harris has generally avoided specifics and expectations for individual players and instead focused on getting players to be more detail-oriented. One thing seems clear: Georgia Southern will try to be much more aggressive and disruptive from a scheme standpoint after generating a paltry nine turnovers in 2021.

One major boost will be the return of cornerback Derrick Canteen, whose 2021 season was derailed early by a pectoral muscle tear.

There are also some talented pieces up front with sixth-year seniors Dillon Springer and Justin Ellis, who can get off blocks, provide pressure from either end and combined for 15 TFLs last season. North Carolina transfer Kristian Varner, a 300-pounder, should also provide some size in the middle.

SPECIALISTS The Eagles could use some more explosive plays out of Hood, who handled most of the return duties last year. Anthony Beck II is a legitimate weapon at punter who pinned opponents inside the 20 a league-leading 23 times last year. Alex Raynor and Britton Williams give them two solid kicking options.

FINAL ANALYSIS The decision by athletics director Jared Benko to hire Helton, who was fired after years of being on the hot seat at USC, is significant not just because of his high profile but because it divorces the program from its longtime association with option football. Patience will be key until Helton can recruit a full roster to his system, but Benko hopes that growing pains will lead to long-term success.

KHALEB HOOD

Georgia Southern Athletics

> "No one's sure what they're gonna look like out of the gate with Clay [Helton]. They don't have enough personnel to transition completely from gun option to going wide-open passing, so where do they land?"
>
> —An opposing Sun Belt assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Terrance Gibbs, RB, Winter Park, FL	★★★★
2	Zak Rozsman, QB, Marietta, GA	★★★
3	David Dallas, QB, Sharpsburg, GA	★★★
4	Da'Shawn Davis, DL, Cornelius, NC	★★★
5	Josh Dallas, ATH, Sharpsburg, GA	★★★
6	MJ Stroud, Edge, Covington, GA	★★★
7	Ashton Whitner, S, Greenville, SC	★★★
8	Pichon Wimbley, OL, Newnan, GA	★★★
9	Jacob Hammonds, LB, Griffin, GA	★★★
10	Marc Stampley II, S, Fayetteville, GA	★★★

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	5	Amare Jones (Sr.)	2	Derwin Burgess Jr. (So.)
WR	7	**Khaleb Hood (Sr.)**	85	Emil Smith (Jr.)
LT	56	**Brian Miller (Sr.)**	77	Griffin Carder (Jr.)
LG	58	Aaron Pyron (Jr.)	63	Teva Reynolds (Jr.)
C	66	**Logan Langemeier (Sr.)**	62	Michael Jubran (Jr.)
RG	72	**Khalil Crowder (Sr.)**	60	Rasheed Miller (So.)
RT	50	**Caleb Kelly (Sr.)**	78	Caleb Cook (Fr.)
TE	11	**Beau Johnson (Jr.)**	83	Chase Hancock (Sr.)
QB	6	Kyle Vantrease (Sr.)	19	Cam Ransom (So.)
RB	4	Gerald Green (Jr.)	25	Jalen White (Jr.)
RB	1	J.D. King (Sr.)	29	AJ Brown (Jr.)

DEFENSE (6)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	42	**Dillon Springer (Sr.)**	40	Jalen Jackson (Jr.)
DT	92	Kristian Varner (Jr.)	90	Parker Devine (Sr.)
DE	2	**Justin Ellis (Sr.)**	32	Andrew Johnson Jr. (Sr.)
OLB	33	Marques Watson-Trent (So.)	39	Reid Dedman (Jr.)
ILB	9	Khadry Jackson (Sr.)	11	Kevon Glenn (Jr.)
ILB	45	**Michael Edwards III (So.)**	34	Jon Ferguson (Sr.)
OLB	15	Quin Williams (Sr.)	1	Todd Bradley-Glenn (Sr.)
CB	13	**Derrick Canteen (Jr.)**	4	Tyler Bride (Jr.)
CB	6	NaJee Thompson (Sr.)	20	Seth Robertson (Jr.)
SS	18	**Justin Birdsong (Sr.)**	17	Myzel Williams (So.)
FS	12	**Anthony Wilson (Jr.)**	25	Tyrell Davis (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	19	Alex Raynor (Jr.)	KR	7	Khaleb Hood (Sr.)
P	7	Anthony Beck II (Sr.)	PR	7	Khaleb Hood (Sr.)

GEORGIA STATE PANTHERS

National Forecast: 72 • Sun Belt East Prediction: 3 • Projected Record: 7-5, 6-2 Sun Belt

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	at South Carolina
Sept. 10	North Carolina
Sept. 17	Charlotte
Sept. 22	Coastal Carolina
Oct. 1	at Army
Oct. 8	Georgia Southern
Oct. 19	at Appalachian State
Oct. 29	Old Dominion
Nov. 5	at Southern Miss
Nov. 12	ULM
Nov. 19	at James Madison
Nov. 26	at Marshall

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 8-5, 6-2 SBC

Sept. 4	Army	L	10-43
Sept. 11	at North Carolina	L	17-59
Sept. 18	Charlotte	W	20-9
Sept. 25	at Auburn	L	24-34
Oct. 2	Appalachian State	L	16-45
Oct. 9	at ULM	W	55-21
Oct. 23	Texas State	W	28-16
Oct. 30	at Georgia Southern	W	21-14
Nov. 4	at Louisiana	L	17-21
Nov. 13	at Coastal Carolina	W	42-40
Nov. 20	Arkansas State	W	28-20
Nov. 27	Troy	W	37-10
Dec. 25	vs. Ball State #	W	51-20

#Camellia Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SB	NATIONAL
Scoring	28.2 ppg	4	68
Rushing	226.4 ypg	2	8
Passing	161.6 ypg	9	119
Total	388.0 ypg	5	72

DEFENSE	PER GAME	SB	NATIONAL
Scoring	27.1 ppg	6	76
Rushing	141.4 ypg	2	47
Passing	261.8 ypg	8	109
Total	403.2 ypg	6	83

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	SB	NATIONAL
+6	+0.46	2	31

STAT CORNER

5.18

Georgia State's robust run game enabled the Panthers to capitalize on scoring opportunities: Georgia State averaged 5.18 points per quality possession, ninth in the nation.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Darren Grainger, 228-136-1,715-4, 19 TDs
Rushing: Tucker Gregg, 192 att., 953 yds., 9 TDs
Receiving: Jamari Thrash, 32 rec., 452 yds., 3 TDs
Tackles: Jordan Veneziale, 97
Sacks: Jamil Muhammad, 6.0
Interceptions: Antavious Lane, 5

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Shawn Elliott
Record at School: 30-30 (5 years)
Career Record: 31-35 (5+ years)
Offensive Coordinator: Trent McKnight
Defensive Coordinator: Nate Fuqua
Location: Atlanta, GA
Stadium: Center Parc Credit Union Stadium (24,333)

OFFENSE Though the running game gets most of the credit for the Panthers' success in 2021, their season turned around when Furman transfer Darren Grainger locked down the starting quarterback job once and for all in mid-October. Now, the question is whether he can add a little more downfield pop to his steadiness (just four INTs on 228 attempts) and running ability (4.8 ypc) to fully maximize a team with four starters returning on the offensive line and the league's best backfield duo in seniors Tucker Gregg (953 yards, nine TDs) and Jamyest Williams (859 yards, nine TDs).

"It's a great one-two punch," head coach Shawn Elliott says of his RBs. "And I think we have two or three young backs that may be as good as our all-conference guys."

There's room to improve through the air, where Grainger averaged just 126 yards on 17.4 attempts per game. Ja'Cyais Credle and Jamari Thrash broke out as sophomores, combining for 53 receptions, while tight end and key red zone threat Aubry Payne (seven TDs) was granted a seventh season of eligibility. If the Panthers can involve those players more and find a suitable replacement for departing left guard Shamarious Gilmore, they should have one of the Sun Belt's top offenses.

DEFENSE The Panthers bring back seven starters from a defense that made some big, disruptive plays with a school-record 36 sacks, 92 tackles for a loss and 21 turnovers forced. A lot of that pressure comes from the linebacking corps in the Panthers' 3-4 scheme, and they'll bring back two all-conference players in Blake Carroll (11.5 TFLs) and Jordan Veneziale (97 tackles, 8 TFLs) along with junior Jamil Muhammad, who had six sacks and a fumble return touchdown. There's also a ton of experience in the back end, led by star safety Antavious Lane (five INTs).

Up front, the Panthers expect Tre Moore and Jeffery Clark to settle into full-time starting roles at each edge position and give their defense even more speed and explosive ability than it had last season.

Georgia State doesn't have a ton of proven depth and will need to stay healthy, particularly at linebacker. The Panthers gave their defensive veterans a light workload in the spring so that younger players could get more reps.

SPECIALISTS The departure of Noel Ruiz (13-of-15 FGs) leaves a big hole at placekicker, which the Panthers will try to fill by having punter Michael Hayes pull double duty unless they add a late transfer. The Panthers do not return many kicks or punts, but Quavian White, a speedy cornerback, handles those duties.

FINAL ANALYSIS Coming off a school-record eight wins, the Panthers return multiple players who earned All-Sun Belt honors and 10 super seniors who are taking advantage of the extra year of COVID eligibility. "We have a little bit of momentum, so we're just trying to keep focused and keep the fight and understand we've got great motivation heading into the season," Elliott says.

DARREN GRAINGER

Michael Wade

> "What jumps out at you is how physical they like to play. They like to hit you and they like to run, and they're starting to really make that their identity."
>
> —An opposing Sun Belt assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Carlos Fletcher, DL, Claremont, NC*	★★★
2	Izaiah Guy, ATH, Ocala, FL	★★★
3	Michai Hill, Edge, Newnan, GA	★★★
4	Isaiah Holland, S, Valdosta, GA	★★★
5	Chris Smith, S, Dacula, GA*	★★★
6	Peter Simmons II, S, McDonough, GA	★★★
7	Jeremiah Johnson, CB, Anguilla, MS*	★★★
8	Rykem Laney, WR, Spartanburg, SC*	★★★
9	Chauncey Kamakea, OL, Tallahassee, FL	★★★
10	JayT Jackson, CB, Columbus, GA	★★★

*junior college transfer

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)

WR	**8**	**Ja'Cyais Credle (Jr.)**	16	Tailique Williams (So.)
WR	**0**	**Terrance Dixon (Sr.)**	14	Robert Lewis (So.)
WR	2	Jamari Thrash (Jr.)	89	Kellan Autenrieth (So.)
LT	**73**	**Travis Glover (Sr.)**	75	Bryson Broadway (Jr.)
LG	65	Avery Reece (Jr.)	79	Montavious Cunningham (Fr.)
C	**62**	**Malik Sumter (Sr.)**	69	Marquez Bargman (Fr.)
RG	**64**	**Pat Bartlett (Sr.)**	76	Jonathan Brown (So.)
RT	**77**	**Johnathan Bass (Sr.)**	74	Despelado Alexandre (Sr.)
TE	88	Aubry Payne (Sr.)	6	Rykem Laney (Jr.)
QB	**3**	**Darren Grainger (Sr.)**	10	Mikele Colasurdo (So.)
RB	**26**	**Tucker Gregg (Sr.)**	21	Jamyest Williams (Sr.)

DEFENSE (7)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	44	Jeffery Clark (Jr.)	**98**	**Javon Denis (Jr.)**
NG	59	Thomas Gore (Jr.)	97	Akeem Smith (Sr.)
DE	54	Tre Moore (Sr.)	99	Omarion Hammond (Fr.)
OLB	**10**	**Jacorey Crawford (Sr.)**	1	Jontrey Hunter (Sr.)
ILB	**42**	**Blake Carroll (Sr.)**	49	Joseph Lopez (Jr.)
ILB	**40**	**Jordan Veneziale (Sr.)**	48	Justin Abraham (So.)
OLB	9	Jamil Muhammad (Jr.)	17	Shamar McCollum (Sr.)
CB	27	Jaylon Jones (Sr.)	**5**	**Bryquice Brown (Jr.)**
CB	**20**	**Quavian White (Sr.)**	6	Jeremiah Johnson (Jr.)
SS	**34**	**Antavious Lane (Jr.)**	24	Tyreke Harrison (Jr.)
FS	22	Jalen Tate (So.)	31	Ronald Cooper (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	39	Michael Hayes (Jr.)	KR	20	Quavian White (Sr.)
P	39	Michael Hayes (Jr.)	PR	20	Quavian White (Sr.)

JAMES MADISON DUKES

National Forecast: 98 • Sun Belt East Prediction: 6 • Projected Record: 6-5, 4-4 Sun Belt

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Middle Tennessee
Sept. 10	Norfolk State
Sept. 24	at Appalachian State
Oct. 1	Texas State
Oct. 8	at Arkansas State
Oct. 15	at Georgia Southern
Oct. 22	Marshall
Nov. 5	at Louisville
Nov. 12	at Old Dominion
Nov. 19	Georgia State
Nov. 26	Coastal Carolina

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 12-2, 7-1 CAA

Sept. 4	Morehead State	W	68-10
Sept. 11	Maine	W	55-7
Sept. 18	at Weber State	W	37-24
Oct. 2	at New Hampshire	W	23-21
Oct. 9	Villanova	L	27-28
Oct. 16	at Richmond	W	19-3
Oct. 23	at Delaware	W	22-10
Oct. 30	Elon	W	45-21
Nov. 6	Campbell	W	51-14
Nov. 13	at William & Mary	W	32-22
Nov. 20	Towson	W	56-10
Dec. 4	SE Louisiana	W	59-20
Dec. 10	Montana	W	28-6
Dec. 17	at North Dakota State	L	14-20

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	CAA	NAT'L (FCS)
Scoring	38.3 ppg	1	5
Rushing	159.1 ypg	4	42
Passing	276.3 ypg	1	17
Total	435.4 ypg	1	17

DEFENSE	PER GAME	CAA	NAT'L (FCS)
Scoring	15.4 ppg	1	7
Rushing	89.0 ypg	1	8
Passing	186.2 ypg	3	21
Total	275.2 ypg	2	8

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	CAA	NAT'L (FCS)
+19	+1.36	1	1

STAT CORNER

27.2%

The Dukes were solid on third down in 2021 on both sides of the ball, ranking fifth in FCS in third-down percentage defense (27.2 percent) and 12th in third-down conversion percentage on offense (44.4).

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Billy Atkins, 14-9-71-0, 2 TDs
Rushing: Latrele Palmer, 188 att., 947 yds., 3 TDs
Receiving: Kris Thornton, 83 rec., 1,097 yds., 13 TDs
Tackles: Diamonte Tucker-Dorsey, 116
Sacks: Isaac Ukwu, 9.0
Interceptions: Diamonte Tucker-Dorsey, 4

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Curt Cignetti
Record at School: 33-5 (3 years)
Career Record: 100-31 (11 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Mike Shanahan
Defensive Coordinator: Bryant Haines
Location: Harrisonburg, VA
Stadium: Bridgeforth Stadium (24,877)

OFFENSE Making the jump to FBS, James Madison is replacing arguably the top FCS quarterback from a year ago, as insanely accurate Cole Johnson (41 TDs, four INTs in 2021) is off to chase his NFL aspirations. The Dukes brought in transfer QB Todd Centeio, who threw for nearly 3,000 yards at Colorado State last season, to battle Johnson's backup, Billy Atkins, for the starting job. True freshman Alonza Barnett III arrived on campus early and earned some first-team reps in the spring.

Whoever starts should have a deep and talented group of running backs alongside him. Percy Agyei-Obese, an FCS All-American who missed most of last season with injury, is back and joined by Pitt transfer A.J. Davis. Latrele Palmer rushed for nearly 1,000 yards last season and might have trouble cracking the two-deep.

Wideout Kris Thornton hauled in 13 TDs last season, but the Dukes need transfers Terrance Greene Jr. (Monmouth) and Kobay White (Boston College) to step up in replacing Antwane Wells Jr., who jumped to South Carolina after putting up 1,250 yards receiving last season.

DEFENSE The Dukes boast depth on the defensive line, with pass-rushing end Isaac Ukwu returning after racking up nine sacks in 2021. Marshall transfer Jamare Edwards should make an immediate impact as well.

At linebacker, Diamonte Tucker-Dorsey has an opportunity to go down as one of JMU's all-time greats at the position after recording a team-best 116 tackles and four interceptions last season. But someone, perhaps Mateo Jackson, needs to rise to a similar level.

Chris Chukwuneke, Sam Kidd and Que Reid are among several productive safeties returning. Arkansas State transfer Jarius Reimonenq and Boston College transfer Deon Jones add even more depth. The cornerbacks will have much less experience as a group as JMU looks to replace Greg Ross (four INTs, 12 breakups).

SPECIALISTS The Dukes have been solid the past four years with placekicker Ethan Ratke and punter Harry O'Kelly. But JMU must replace both. Ratke finished his career as the NCAA's all-division career leader with 101 made field goals. Kickoff specialist Camden Wise as well as Connor Madden might get an opportunity this season. True freshman Hugo Nash could be in line to replace O'Kelly.

FINAL ANALYSIS The Dukes have recruited on an FBS level for years, and the extra seasons granted to players due to COVID-19 have allowed JMU an easier transition in terms of scholarship numbers. Head coach Curt Cignetti's work in the transfer portal could pay off if Centeio proves to be the answer at quarterback. He gives the Dukes a dual-threat look they didn't have last season. Defensively, the Dukes dominated at the FCS level even when facing NFL-caliber quarterbacks such as Southeastern Louisiana's Cole Kelley. If JMU has the size and depth up front to do that week in and week out against the Sun Belt's outstanding QBs, the Dukes might be in for a fun debut season.

ISAAC UKWU

Ken Inness/Cal Sport Media via AP Images

> "Curt [Cignetti] was at Alabama; he understands program development. This program reminds us a little of App State, which is a huge compliment for a transition program. The best-case scenario is that they don't make changes for the sake of it and adjust their recruiting to that FBS level as fast as they can."
>
> —An opposing Sun Belt assistant coach

TOP 4 RECRUITS

1	Carter Sweazie, OL, Ashburn, VA	n/r
2	Alonza Barnett III, QB, Greensboro, NC	n/r
3	Trent Hendrick, LB, Richmond, VA	n/r
4	Carter Miller, OL, Brentwood, TN	n/r

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (4)

WR	0	Terrance Greene Jr. (Sr.)	9	Reggie Brown (Jr.)
WR	7	Kobay White (Sr.)	16	Desmond Green (Fr.)
WR	**8**	**Kris Thornton (Sr.)**	19	Devin Ravenel (Sr.)
LT	78	Isaac Owusu-Appiah (So.)	55	Ronald Altman (So.)
LG	74	Tyler Stephens (So.)	**52**	**Tyshawn Wyatt (So.)**
C	58	Tanner Morris (So.)	54	Carter Miller (Fr.)
RG	**66**	**Cole Potts (So.)**	71	Scott Hummel (Fr.)
RT	**56**	**Nick Kidwell (Jr.)**	75	Jaelin Montgomery (Fr.)
TE	89	Drew Painter (Sr.)	85	Noah Turner (Sr.)
QB	1	Todd Centeio (Sr.)	11	Billy Atkins (Fr.)
RB	31	Percy Agyei-Obese (Sr.)	21	A.J. Davis (Sr.)

DEFENSE (6)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	97	Abi Nwabuoku-Okonji (Jr.)	38	Mikail Kamara (Fr.)
NT		**Tony Thurston (Jr.)**	94	Sean Johns (So.)
DT	15	Jamare Edwards (Sr.)	55	Jordan Funk (So.)
DE	**0**	**Isaac Ukwu (Sr.)**	10	Jalen Green (Jr.)
LB	**2**	**Diamonte Tucker-Dorsey (Sr.)**	46	Seth Naotala (So.)
LB	51	Mateo Jackson (Sr.)	44	Taurus Jones (So.)
CB	21	Jordan Swann (Sr.)	5	Wesley McCormick (Sr.)
CB	20	Xavier Cokley (So.)	26	Devyn Coles (Jr.)
ROV	**34**	**Chris Chukwuneke (Jr.)**	12	Josh Sarratt (Jr.)
SS	7	Jarius Reimonenq (Jr.)	8	Deon Jones (Sr.)
FS	**33**	**Sam Kidd (Sr.)**	**1**	**Que Reid (Jr.)**

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	40	Camden Wise (Jr.)	**KR**	3	Solomon Vanhorse (Jr.)
P	98	Hugo Nash (Fr.)	**PR**	3	Solomon Vanhorse (Jr.)

MARSHALL THUNDERING HERD

National Forecast: 75 • Sun Belt East Prediction: 4 • Projected Record: 8-4, 5-3 Sun Belt

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Norfolk State
Sept. 10	at Notre Dame
Sept. 17	at Bowling Green
Sept. 24	at Troy
Oct. 1	Gardner-Webb
Oct. 12	Louisiana
Oct. 22	at James Madison
Oct. 29	Coastal Carolina
Nov. 5	at Old Dominion
Nov. 12	Appalachian State
Nov. 19	at Georgia Southern
Nov. 26	Georgia State

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 7-6, 5-3 C-USA

Sept. 4	at Navy	W	49-7
Sept. 11	North Carolina Central	W	44-10
Sept. 18	East Carolina	L	38-42
Sept. 23	at App. State	L	30-31
Oct. 2	at Middle Tennessee	L	28-34
Oct. 9	Old Dominion (ot)	W	20-13
Oct. 15	at North Texas	W	49-21
Oct. 30	FIU	W	38-0
Nov. 6	at Florida Atlantic	W	28-13
Nov. 13	UAB	L	14-21
Nov. 20	at Charlotte	W	49-28
Nov. 27	WKU	L	21-53
Dec. 18	vs. Louisiana #	L	21-36

#New Orleans Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	CUSA	NATIONAL
Scoring	33.0 ppg	3	30
Rushing	162.4 ypg	4	64
Passing	294.4 ypg	2	18
Total	456.8 ypg	2	16

DEFENSE	PER GAME	CUSA	NATIONAL
Scoring	23.8 ppg	2	44
Rushing	188.7 ypg	12	104
Passing	205.3 ypg	2	28
Total	394.0 ypg	8	79

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	CUSA	NATIONAL
-7	-0.54	10	107

STAT CORNER

46.6%

Marshall ranked 11th in rushing efficiency with a 46.6% rushing success rate. The Thundering Herd averaged 0.109 EPA/rush, 28th nationally.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Cam Fancher, 6-3-46-0, 0 TDs
Rushing: Rasheen Ali, 250 att., 1,401 yds., 23 TDs
Receiving: Corey Gammage, 78 rec., 878 yds., 2 TDs
Tackles: Abraham Beauplan, 110
Sacks: Eli Neal, 5.5
Interceptions: Steven Gilmore, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Charles Huff
Record at School: 7-6 (1 year)
Career Record: 7-6 (1 year)
Offensive Coordinator: Clint Trickett
Defensive Coordinator: Lance Guidry
Location: Huntington, WV
Stadium: Joan C. Edwards Stadium (38,227)

OFFENSE Much of the focus leading into the 2022 season has been centered around the quarterback position after two-year starter Grant Wells left Marshall for Virginia Tech. While everyone is eager to see what Texas Tech transfer Henry Colombi can do with the Marshall aerial attack, the bigger focus should be on the offensive line, where the Herd must replace three five-year starters (yes, that's right). A fourth 2021 contributor — Logan Osburn — will transition to center. ECU transfer Trent Holler should help on the interior, while right tackle Kendrick Sartor is the constant.

Marshall possesses one of the nation's top returning running backs in Rasheen Ali, who rushed for 1,401 yards and tied for the national lead in rushing touchdowns (23) last year. Ali will also be a reliable weapon in the passing game, a role that may intensify with Clint Trickett taking over as offensive coordinator. The Herd have some nice weapons in the receiving game with Corey Gammage and Talik Keaton, and one player who emerged in spring was Jayden Harrison. Despite the questions on the offensive line, Colombi has plenty of weapons to take advantage of this fall.

DEFENSE Last season, Marshall head coach Charles Huff liked the tenacity of his defense but noted near the end of the season that the interior of the defensive front struggled to close out games. In the offseason, Huff made fixing that a priority with three Power 5 transfers on the interior: Kentucky's Isaiah Gibson, Miami's Quentin Williams and Purdue's Anthony Watts. Those players join a talented group of returning edge rushers (Koby Cumberlander, Owen Porter, Elijah Alston) to make the defensive front the Herd's strongest position.

Marshall also returns Eli Neal and Abraham Beauplan at linebacker, providing continuity and leadership — along with more than 200 tackles from last season's defense.

The biggest questions are on the back end, where the Herd have to replace three safeties, but Huff went out and got grad transfers in Andre Sam (McNeese) and Isaiah Norman (Austin Peay) to help. Steven Gilmore also gives Marshall a lockdown cornerback, which plays into defensive coordinator Lance Guidry's hands as he looks to bring pressure.

SPECIALISTS Zach Appio returns as an all-league long-snapper for the Herd, and Harrison and Keaton bring experience to the return game, but the kicking spots will feature new faces. John McConnell is expected to take over as the team's punter, while Kenyon Bowyer should handle placekicking duties.

FINAL ANALYSIS Marshall has the pieces to compete in the Sun Belt, but the Herd will have to do a better job of finishing than they did in 2021, when they squandered late leads in three games — two of them against Appalachian State and Louisiana. There's a significant jump in competition level in moving from Conference USA to the Sun Belt, so the Herd's consistency must match their talent level.

RASHEEN ALI

Marshall Athletics

> "This is the program that no one in the Sun Belt wants to play. They have enough talent to compete with the top teams right away, but let's see how they adjust to some of these schemes and coaches."
>
> —An opposing Sun Belt assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Dainsus Miller, CB, Fairburn, GA	★★★
2	Chase Harrison, QB, Dayton, OH	★★★
3	Sean Sallis, TE, Carrollton, TX	★★★
4	Isaiah Gordon, ATH, Daytona Beach, FL	★★★
5	Leon Hart Jr., LB, Miami, FL	★★★
6	Toby Payne, TE, Poca, WV	★★★
7	Zion Odoms, WR, Macon, GA	★★★
8	Elijah Russell, Edge, Ocala, FL	★★★
9	Jacobie Henderson, S, Fort Mill, SC	★★★
10	James Smyre, LB, Phenix, City, AL	★★★

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (3)

WR	1	Talik Keaton (Jr.)	5	Caleb McMillan (Jr.)
WR	**7**	**Corey Gammage (Jr.)**	0	Shadeed Ahmed (Jr.)
WR	2	Jayden Harrison (So.)	9	Bryan Robinson (So.)
LT	52	Ethan Driskell (Jr.)	68	Dalton Tucker (Jr.)
LG	55	Trent Holler (So.)	54	Steven Faucheux (So.)
C	65	Logan Osburn (So.)	57	Eric Meeks (Fr.)
RG		Cedrice Paillant (Sr.)	68	Dalton Tucker (Jr.)
RT	**56**	**Kendrick Sartor (Sr.)**	79	Jacob Kirkendoll (Sr.)
TE	83	Devin Miller (Sr.)	89	Marcus Velez (So.)
QB	3	Henry Colombi (Sr.)	14	Cam Fancher (Fr.)
RB	**22**	**Rasheen Ali (So.)**	8	Khalan Laborn (Sr.)

DEFENSE (4)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	2	Elijah Alston (So.)	55	Owen Porter (Jr.)
DT	99	Isaiah Gibson Sr. (So.)	19	Anthony Watts (Sr.)
DT	59	Immanuel Bush (So.)	9	Quentin Williams (Fr.)
DE	32	Koby Cumberlander (Sr.)	38	Arak McDuffie (Jr.)
OLB	**7**	**Abraham Beauplan (Sr.)**	30	Tyriek Bell (Sr.)
MLB	**24**	**Eli Neal (Jr.)**	17	Leon Hart Jr. (Fr.)
OLB	1	Charlie Gray (Sr.)	21	E.J. Jackson (Jr.)
CB	10	Joshua Bowers (Sr.)	**6**	**Micah Abraham (Jr.)**
CB	**3**	**Steven Gilmore (Sr.)**	14	Jacobie Henderson (Fr.)
SS	8	Isaiah Norman (Sr.)	22	Kerion Martin (So.)
FS	20	Andre Sam (Sr.)	13	Daytione Smith (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	97	Kenyon Bowyer (Jr.)	**KR**	2	Jayden Harrison (So.)
P	45	John McConnell (Fr.)	**PR**	1	Talik Keaton (Jr.)

OLD DOMINION MONARCHS

National Forecast: 97 • Sun Belt East Prediction: 5 • Projected Record: 5-7, 4-4 Sun Belt

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	Virginia Tech
Sept. 10	at East Carolina
Sept. 17	at Virginia
Sept. 24	Arkansas State
Oct. 1	Liberty
Oct. 15	at Coastal Carolina
Oct. 22	Georgia Southern
Oct. 29	at Georgia State
Nov. 5	Marshall
Nov. 12	James Madison
Nov. 19	at App State
Nov. 26	at South Alabama

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 6-7, 5-3 C-USA

Sept. 3	at Wake Forest	L	10-42
Sept. 11	Hampton	W	47-7
Sept. 18	at Liberty	L	17-45
Sept. 25	Buffalo	L	34-35
Oct. 2	at UTEP	L	21-28
Oct. 9	at Marshall (ot)	L	13-20
Oct. 16	WKU	L	20-43
Oct. 30	Louisiana Tech	W	23-20
Nov. 6	at FIU	W	47-24
Nov. 13	Florida Atlantic	W	30-16
Nov. 20	at Middle Tenn.	W	24-17
Nov. 27	Charlotte	W	56-34
Dec. 20	vs. Tulsa #	L	17-30

#Myrtle Beach Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	CUSA	NATIONAL
Scoring	27.6 ppg	7	73
Rushing	158.3 ypg	5	72
Passing	214.8 ypg	10	83
Total	373.1 ypg	10	85

DEFENSE	PER GAME	CUSA	NATIONAL
Scoring	27.3 ppg	7	77
Rushing	134.2 ypg	3	35
Passing	250.0 ypg	7	101
Total	384.2 ypg	7	69

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	CUSA	NATIONAL
-8	-0.62	12	116

STAT CORNER

41

Old Dominion's defense was adept at preventing the big play, allowing only 41 plays of 20+ yards, the 16th fewest in the FBS.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Hayden Wolff, 253-159-1,933-7, 10 TDs
Rushing: Blake Watson, 215 att., 1,112 yds., 8 TDs
Receiving: Ali Jennings III, 62 rec., 1,066 yds., 5 TDs
Tackles: R'Tarriun Johnson, 91
Sacks: Marcus Haynes, 5.5
Interceptions: R'Tarriun Johnson, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Ricky Rahne
Record at School: 6-7 (1 year)
Career Record: 6-7 (1 year)
Offensive Coordinator: Dave Patenaude
Defensive Coordinator: Blake Seiler
Location: Norfolk, VA
Stadium: S.B. Ballard Stadium (22,480)

OFFENSE Sophomore quarterback Hayden Wolff returns after a solid season that saw him throw for nine touchdowns during the five-game winning streak that clinched the Monarchs' spot in the Myrtle Beach Bowl. But Notre Dame transfer Brendon Clark and senior D.J. Mack Jr., who are both adept at running the ball, will be in the mix for the starting gig.

The QB will benefit from a solid running back group featuring junior Blake Watson, who ran for 1,112 yards last season, and proven options in junior Elijah Davis and sophomore Jon-Luke Peaker, along with promising redshirt freshman Tariq Sims.

The Monarchs' offensive line will have veteran talent in junior right tackle Nick Saldiveri, junior left tackle Khadere Kounta, senior left guard Tyran Hunt and junior right guard Leroy Thomas.

Junior Zack Kuntz, who made a team-high 73 catches last season, returns at tight end alongside senior Donta Anthony, who will also figure into the passing attack. After racking up 1,066 receiving yards last season, Ali Jennings III is a proven threat in a receiving corps that is otherwise undefined.

DEFENSE Old Dominion's defense held its own against Conference USA foes. But the potent offenses of the Sun Belt will offer new challenges. The Monarchs are especially deep along the defensive front, as senior Marcus Haynes, who logged a team-high 5.5 sacks last season, and sophomore Deeve Harris will likely be the prime defensive ends, and sophomores Alonzo Ford and Devin Brandt-Epps could open eyes at defensive tackle. Senior Ryan Henry will slide into the linebacker position vacated by the school's all-time leading tackler in Jordan Young. Sophomore Jason Henderson and senior Steven Williams will also see significant action.

Senior R'Tarriun Johnson returns at safety, where he established himself as a team leader. Johnson spearheads a secondary that will lean on sophomore Terry Jones and senior cornerback Tre Hawkins.

SPECIALISTS Nick Rice graduated with the school record of 64 career field goals. Freshman Ethan Sanchez will have the opportunity to fill Rice's field goal role, while senior Dominik Soos will likely handle kickoff duties. Australian punter Ethan Duane averaged 39.7 yards per kick last season. LaMareon James will reprise his role as kick returner, while Jennings will be in the mix to return punts.

FINAL ANALYSIS With a veteran-laden offense and a defense with proven playmakers, head coach Ricky Rahne says the anticipation is high among both his team and the fan base. "We're obviously very excited because there are some really great football teams in this league, and it's much more geographically friendly for our fans and our travel," Rahne says. "So hopefully everybody can get on board a little bit more with developing rivalries, which is something we struggled with in Conference USA."

BLAKE WATSON

Old Dominion Athletics

> "Considering they didn't play football in 2020, you really have to credit Ricky Rahne with how well they did. The conference change means they'll probably lose one or two more, but they're still on track."
>
> —An opposing C-USA assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Peter Kikwata, WR, Germantown, MD	★★★
2	Ahmarian Granger, ATH, Norfolk, VA	★★★
3	Tajae Broadie, TE, Middletown, PA	★★★
4	Ryan Nolan, OL, Chesapeake, VA	★★★
5	Jude Buchanan, LB, Blairstown, NJ	★★★
6	Mario Easterly, WR, Harrisburg, PA	★★★
7	Caron McNair, OL, Toms River, NJ	★★★
8	Mason Howard, OL, Midlothian, VA	★★★
9	Jaylon White, Edge, Virginia Beach, VA	★★★
10	Maarten Woudsma, OL, Chesapeake, VA	★★★

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (11)

WR	**0**	**Ali Jennings III (Jr.)**	10	Marquez Bell (Fr.)
WR	**6**	**Isiah Paige (So.)**	1	Jordan Bly (So.)
WR	**18**	**Javon Harvey (So.)**	16	Aaron Moore (Jr.)
LT	**53**	**Khadere Kounta (Jr.)**	65	Chris Adams (Fr.)
LG	**67**	**Tyran Hunt (Sr.)**	58	Stephon Dubose-Bourne (Fr.)
C	77	Gerrik Vollmer (Sr.)	63	Xavier Black (So.)
RG	**79**	**Leroy Thomas (Jr.)**	72	Talyn Hunter (So.)
RT	**64**	**Nick Saldiveri (Jr.)**	71	Santana Saunders (So.)
TE	**80**	**Zack Kuntz (Jr.)**	**9**	**Donta Anthony Jr. (Sr.)**
QB	**11**	**Hayden Wolff (So.)**	4	Brendon Clark (So.)
RB	**2**	**Blake Watson (Jr.)**	5	Elijah Davis (Jr.)

DEFENSE (6)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	11	Deeve Harris (So.)	**19**	**Amorie Morrison (So.)**
DT	**5**	**Alonzo Ford Jr. (So.)**	10	Chazz Wallace (So.)
DT	**99**	**Tyre Bibby (Sr.)**	97	Devin Brandt-Epps (So.)
DE	9	Marcus Haynes (Sr.)	89	Kris Caine (So.)
LB	42	Jason Henderson (So.)	24	EJ Green (So.)
LB	**8**	**Ryan Henry (Sr.)**	25	Steven Williams (Sr.)
CB	2	LaMareon James (So.)	17	Damion Charity (Jr.)
CB	**6**	**Tre Hawkins III (Sr.)**	23	JeCareon Lathan (So.)
S	**21**	**R'Tarriun Johnson (Sr.)**	3	Robert Kennedy III (Jr.)
S	13	Terry Jones (So.)	27	Jahaad Scales (Fr.)
S	12	Tahj Ra-El (So.)	35	Luke Lindenfeldar (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	92	Ethan Sanchez (Fr.)	**KR**	2	LaMareon James (So.)
P	95	Ethan Duane (So.)	**PR**	0	Ali Jennings III (Jr.)

ARKANSAS STATE RED WOLVES

National Forecast: 118 • Sun Belt West Prediction: 6 • Projected Record: 4-8, 2-6 Sun Belt

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Grambling State
Sept. 10	at Ohio State
Sept. 17	at Memphis
Sept. 24	at Old Dominion
Oct. 1	ULM
Oct. 8	James Madison
Oct. 15	at Southern Miss
Oct. 22	at Louisiana
Oct. 29	South Alabama
Nov. 12	UMass
Nov. 19	at Texas State
Nov. 26	Troy

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 2-10, 1-7 SBC

Sept. 4	Central Arkansas	W	40-21
Sept. 11	Memphis	L	50-55
Sept. 18	at Washington	L	3-52
Sept. 25	at Tulsa	L	34-41
Oct. 2	at Georgia Southern	L	33-59
Oct. 7	Coastal Carolina	L	20-52
Oct. 21	Louisiana	L	27-28
Oct. 30	at South Alabama	L	13-31
Nov. 6	Appalachian State	L	14-48
Nov. 13	at ULM	W	27-24
Nov. 20	at Georgia State	L	20-28
Nov. 27	Texas State	L	22-24

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SB	NATIONAL
Scoring	25.2 ppg	5	87
Rushing	82.4 ypg	10	128
Passing	313.9 ypg	1	11
Total	396.3 ypg	4	69

DEFENSE	PER GAME	SB	NATIONAL
Scoring	38.6 ppg	10	124
Rushing	260.9 ypg	10	130
Passing	244.8 ypg	6	94
Total	505.8 ypg	10	129

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	SB	NATIONAL
-4	-0.33	8	93

STAT CORNER

29.2%

Arkansas State's offense posted the second-worst rushing success rate in the nation, staying ahead of the chains on only 29.2 percent of rushes. The Red Wolves' -0.144 EPA per rush ranked 127th among FBS teams.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: James Blackman, 183-109-1,344-4, 8 TDs
Rushing: Johnnie Lang, 65 att., 263 yds., 0 TDs
Receiving: Te'Vailance Hunt, 51 rec., 740 yds., 6 TDs
Tackles: Kivon Bennett, 58
Sacks: Kivon Bennett, 8.0
Interceptions: Samy Johnson, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Butch Jones
Record at School: 2-10 (1 year)
Career Record: 86-64 (12 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Keith Heckendorf
Defensive Coordinator: Rob Harley
Location: Jonesboro, AR
Stadium: Centennial Bank Stadium (30,382)

OFFENSE Deficient on the line and typically trailing on the scoreboard, the Red Wolves were forced into a pass-heavy approach in Butch Jones' first season as head coach. James Blackman is entrenched as the No. 1 quarterback. A year's experience in ASU's system should benefit Blackman, a Florida State transfer who passed for 1,344 yards while facing constant defensive pressure.

The Red Wolves are likely to seek transfer help to bolster a receiver corps led by Te'Vailance Hunt and Jeff Foreman. Hunt, a TCU transfer, caught 51 passes for 740 yards and six TDs, while Foreman averaged nearly 18 yards per catch on 31 receptions. Tight end Emmanual Stevenson was honorable mention All-Sun Belt as a freshman.

Johnnie Lang, who started three games last fall after transferring from Iowa State, took on the lead role at running back in the spring. While Lincoln Pare, last year's leading rusher, went into the transfer portal after spring practice, ASU still has solid depth with freshman Mike Sharpe II, former SBC Freshman of the Year Marcel Murray and Purdue transfer Ja'Quez Cross.

ASU averaged only 82.4 rushing yards per game last year behind an overmatched line that allowed 48 sacks. Jones signed five high school linemen and figures to scour the transfer portal for experienced help.

DEFENSE The Red Wolves surrendered a staggering 21 TD plays of 40 or more yards in 2021. To help prevent big plays, transfers popped up at every level of ASU's defense in the spring. King Mwikuta (Alabama) and Blayne Toll (Arkansas/Colorado) should help at end, while Terion Sugick (Vanderbilt) will bolster the interior. Linebacker Jordan Carmouche (Houston) and safety Eddie Smith (Alabama/Illinois) figure to start.

Kivon Bennett moved to linebacker in the spring after earning second-team All-Sun Belt honors at end last season. Bennett finished with eight sacks and 16.5 tackles for a loss after transferring from Tennessee. Linebacker Melique Straker showed promise in five starts, making 14 tackles against Georgia State.

Jones expects improvement in the secondary. Smith slid into one safety position in the spring, and Taylon Doss returns at the other. The Red Wolves are experienced at cornerback with Samy Johnson, Leon Jones and Kenneth Harris, who combined for six interceptions in '21.

SPECIALISTS The Red Wolves have three candidates to replace second-team All-Sun Belt kicker Blake Grupe, who transferred to Notre Dame. Punter Ryan Hanson was third-team All-Sun Belt after averaging 44 yards last season. Lang, who returned a punt for a touchdown against Tulsa, is solid on returns.

FINAL ANALYSIS Woeful on defense and one-dimensional on offense, the Red Wolves were often overwhelmed last year. While Arkansas State signed the Sun Belt's best recruiting class according to a couple of services, their roster issues will take more than a year to correct. Dramatic improvement seems unlikely, but some progress isn't too much to ask.

TE'VAILANCE HUNT

AP Photo/Michael Woods

> "With the quality of depth in this league, I don't think they're going to bounce back quickly. This season will be hard for them to get any better."
>
> —An opposing Sun Belt assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Miller McCrumby, TE, Mount Pleasant, TX	★★★
2	Elijah Zollicoffer, DL, Covington, GA	★★★
3	Jaxon Dailey, QB, Des Moines, IA	★★★
4	Ahmad Robinson, CB, East St. Louis, IL	★★★
5	Keyron Crawford, Edge, Memphis, TN	★★★
6	Benson Prosper, WR, Hialeah, FL	★★★
7	Websley Etienne, S, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	★★★
8	Daverrick Jenkins, WR, Miami, FL	★★★
9	James Reed III, CB, Nashville, TN	★★★
10	Javante Mackey, Edge, Memphis, TN	★★★

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

WR	**10**	**Te'Vailance Hunt (Sr.)**		Daverrick Jenkins (Fr.)
WR	**13**	**Jeff Foreman (Jr.)**	81	Omari Walker (Fr.)
WR	28	Reagan Ealy (So.)	6	Wyatt Begeal (Fr.)
LT	77	Makilan Thomas (Fr.)	65	Noah Smith (Fr.)
LG	71	Mekhi Butler (So.)	54	Christian Hoz (Jr.)
C	**67**	**Ethan Miner (So.)**	76	Kyle Kelly (Fr.)
RG	73	Ernesto Ramirez (Sr.)	63	Darrell Harden (Fr.)
RT	57	Robert Holmes (Jr.)	50	Austin Woods (Fr.)
TE	**12**	**Emmanual Stevenson (So.)**	18	Seydou Traore (So.)
QB	**1**	**James Blackman (Sr.)**	15	Jaxon Dailey (Fr.)
RB	2	Johnnie Lang (Sr.)	34	Marcel Murray (Jr.)

DEFENSE (4)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	30	King Mwikuta (Jr.)	17	Blayne Toll (So.)
DT	0	John Mincey (Sr.)	46	Ethan Hassler (So.)
DT	7	Terion Sugick (Fr.)	59	Tim Hardiman (Fr.)
DE	92	Thurman Geathers (Sr.)	18	Dennard Flowers (Fr.)
LB	**5**	**Kivon Bennett (Sr.)**	**11**	**Jaden Harris (Jr.)**
LB	10	Jordan Carmouche (Sr.)	36	Charles Willekes (So.)
LB	38	Melique Straker (Jr.)	33	Cam Jeffery (So.)
CB	3	Kenneth Harris (So.)	**1**	**Samy Johnson (Jr.)**
CB	**2**	**Leon Jones (Jr.)**	19	Denzel Blackwell (So.)
S	8	Eddie Smith (Jr.)	9	Trevian Thomas (So.)
S	37	Taylon Doss (So.)	29	Justin Parks (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	32	Aidan Ellison (Fr.)	**KR**	2	Johnnie Lang (Sr.)
P	48	Ryan Hanson (So.)	**PR**	2	Johnnie Lang (Sr.)

LOUISIANA RAGIN' CAJUNS

National Forecast: 79 • Sun Belt West Prediction: 1 • Projected Record: 8-5, 5-3 Sun Belt

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	SE Louisiana
Sept. 10	Eastern Michigan
Sept. 17	at Rice
Sept. 24	at ULM
Oct. 1	South Alabama
Oct. 12	at Marshall
Oct. 22	Arkansas State
Oct. 27	at Southern Miss
Nov. 5	Troy
Nov. 10	Georgia Southern
Nov. 19	at Florida State
Nov. 26	at Texas State

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 13-1, 8-0 SBC

Sept. 4	at Texas	L	18-38
Sept. 11	Nicholls	W	27-24
Sept. 16	Ohio	W	49-14
Sept. 25	at Georgia Southern	W	28-20
Oct. 2	at South Alabama	W	20-18
Oct. 12	Appalachian State	W	41-13
Oct. 21	at Arkansas State	W	28-27
Oct. 30	Texas State	W	45-0
Nov. 4	Georgia State	W	21-17
Nov. 13	at Troy	W	35-21
Nov. 20	at Liberty	W	42-14
Nov. 27	ULM	W	21-16
Dec. 4	Appalachian State #	W	24-16
Dec. 18	vs. Marshall %	W	36-21

#SBC Championship %New Orleans Bowl

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SB	NATIONAL
Scoring	31.1 ppg	3	45
Rushing	187.1 ypg	5	40
Passing	217.7 ypg	6	78
Total	404.8 ypg	3	64

DEFENSE	PER GAME	SB	NATIONAL
Scoring	18.5 ppg	1	11
Rushing	144.5 ypg	4	54
Passing	190.1 ypg	1	14
Total	334.6 ypg	1	22

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	SB	NATIONAL
+15	+1.07	1	2

STAT CORNER

33.5%

Louisiana held opponents to a 33.5 percent passing success rate, eighth nationally.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Chandler Fields, 13-9-106-0, 1 TD
Rushing: Chris Smith, 152 att., 844 yds., 8 TDs
Receiving: Peter LeBlanc, 35 rec., 386 yds., 1 TD
Tackles: Andre Jones, 61
Sacks: Zi'Yon Hill, 6.5
Interceptions: Eric Garror, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Michael Desormeaux
Record at School: 1-0
Career Record: 1-0
Offensive Coordinator: Tim Leger
Defensive Coordinator: LaMar Morgan
Location: Lafayette, LA
Stadium: Cajun Field (41,264)

OFFENSE One of the hallmarks of the Ragin' Cajuns' success under departed head coach Billy Napier was their depth. The 2022 campaign will put it to the test: Along with Napier, who took his play-calling prowess to Florida, the offseason exodus from Lafayette included veteran quarterback Levi Lewis, two-thirds of the regular backfield rotation and four starters on the offensive line.

After three years as Lewis' understudy, Chandler Fields entered the spring as the de facto front-runner in a three-way competition with transfers Ben Wooldridge (Fresno State) and Lance LeGendre (Maryland), and Fields ended it in a dead heat with Wooldridge.

Whoever emerges behind center will have the benefit of versatile senior RB Chris Smith, who's averaged 6.5 yards per touch with 15 touchdowns for his career, as well as a familiar cast of targets among the receivers and tight ends. But the vacancies up front loom large. Beyond the lone returning starter, guard AJ Gillie, 2021 injury casualty Carlos Rubio is the only other lineman with notable starting experience.

DEFENSE Like the offense, the defense faces a hard reset with coordinator Patrick Toney and half the starting lineup moving on. The good news for new DC LaMar Morgan is a) the starters who remain have played a lot of football, and b) thanks to liberal substitution patterns, so has most of the supporting cast. Holdovers on the D-line (Andre Jones and Zi'Yon Hill) and in the secondary (Bralen Trahan, Eric Garror and Kam Pedescleaux) are all in their fifth or sixth year in the program. Ditto the rising starters at linebacker, AJ Riley, Kris Moncrief, and Jourdan Quibodeaux, and nickel back Ja'len Johnson, who'll compete at the Star position with Alabama transfer Brandon Bishop.

The biggest question mark is the pass rush, which must replace All-Sun Belt OLB Chauncey Manac and his 10.5 sacks. Riley will move into that role, but Jones and Hill (86 combined QB pressures in 2021, per Pro Football Focus) will also be counted on to supply some pocket-collapsing push.

SPECIALISTS Senior kicker Kenneth Almendares (9-of-10 on field goals the past two years) is back from an injury that sidelined him for most of 2021. Punter Rhys Byrns was All-SBC in 2021 after averaging 46.0 yards per attempt; he's dropped 81 of his 192 career boots inside the opposing 20-yard line. Senior return men Smith (kickoffs) and Garror (punts) have both taken kicks to the house. Few surprises are in store.

FINAL ANALYSIS Promoting Michael Desormeaux from within was a signal that the Cajuns have no intention of starting from scratch. Desormeaux, 36, is a Louisiana alum who has lived nearly his entire life within a half-hour of campus. With continuity, though, comes little margin for error in Year 1. The talent base is as solid as any in the Sun Belt, and a fifth consecutive division crown may be the bare minimum for chalking up the transition as a success.

MICHAEL JEFFERSON

Benjamin R. Massey/Ragin Cajun Athletics

> "With Billy [Napier] gone, what does the next era look like? They're losing production, leadership, identity, all of it, and we aren't sure how similar the schemes will be, either."
>
> —An opposing Sun Belt assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Lorenzell Dubose, CB, Monroe, LA	★★★
2	Kailep Edwards, LB, Edgard, LA	★★★
3	Zeon Chriss, QB, Baton Rouge, LA	★★★
4	Terrance Carter, TE, Harker Heights, TX	★★★
5	Damon Youngblood, S, McKinney, TX	★★★
6	Charles Robertson, WR, Zachary, LA	★★★
7	Jaydon Johnson, WR, Missouri City, TX	★★★
8	Marcus Wiser, DL, Corpus Christi, TX*	★★★
9	Bryant Williams, OT, Lake Charles, LA	★★★
10	Kaden Moreau, OT, Pineville, LA	n/r

*junior college transfer

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	**29**	**Peter LeBlanc (Jr.)**	4	Jacob Bernard (So.)
WR	**8**	**Michael Jefferson (Sr.)**	7	John Stephens Jr. (Sr.)
WR	17	Dontae Fleming (So.)	6	Errol Rogers Jr. (So.)
LT	50	Nathan Thomas (So.)	77	King McGowen (So.)
LG	**53**	**AJ Gillie (So.)**	71	George Jackson (Fr.)
C	55	Landon Burton (So.)	70	Jax Harrington (So.)
RG	73	David Hudson (Sr.)	51	James Ohonba (Jr.)
RT	65	Carlos Rubio (Sr.)	79	Mackey Maillho (Fr.)
TE	**9**	**Neal Johnson (Jr.)**	**88**	**Johnny Lumpkin (Sr.)**
QB	18	Chandler Fields (So.)	10	Ben Wooldridge (Jr.)
RB	**13**	**Chris Smith (Jr.)**	23	Terrence Williams (So.)

DEFENSE (5)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	**10**	**Andre Jones (Sr.)**	8	Kendall Wilkerson (So.)
NT	97	Ja-Quane Nelson (Sr.)	91	Sonny Hazard (So.)
DT	**4**	**Zi'Yon Hill (Sr.)**	90	Mason Narcisse (So.)
OLB	19	AJ Riley (Sr.)	33	Tyler Guidry (Jr.)
ILB	6	Kris Moncrief (Sr.)	29	K.C. Ossai (So.)
ILB	43	Jourdan Quibodeaux (Sr.)	18	Jasper Williams (Jr.)
CB	**7**	**Eric Garror (Sr.)**	16	AJ Washington (Sr.)
CB	21	Trey Amos (So.)	13	Amir McDaniel (So.)
STAR	2	Brandon Bishop (Jr.)	28	Ja'len Johnson (Sr.)
SS	**0**	**Kam Pedescleaux (Jr.)**	31	Tyree Skipper (Fr.)
FS	**24**	**Bralen Trahan (Sr.)**	3	Tyrone Lewis Jr. (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	45	Kenneth Almendares (Sr.)	KR	13	Chris Smith (Jr.)
P	47	Rhys Byrns (Sr.)	PR	7	Eric Garror (Sr.)

SOUTH ALABAMA JAGUARS

National Forecast: 93 • Sun Belt West Prediction: 2 • Projected Record: 6-6, 4-4 Sun Belt

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Nicholls
Sept. 10	at Central Michigan
Sept. 17	at UCLA
Sept. 24	Louisiana Tech
Oct. 1	at Louisiana
Oct. 15	ULM
Oct. 20	Troy
Oct. 29	at Arkansas State
Nov. 5	at Georgia Southern
Nov. 12	Texas State
Nov. 19	at Southern Miss
Nov. 26	Old Dominion

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 5-7, 2-6 SBC

Sept. 4	Southern Miss	W	31-7
Sept. 11	at Bowling Green	W	22-19
Sept. 18	Alcorn State	W	28-21
Oct. 2	Louisiana	L	18-20
Oct. 9	at Texas State (ot)	L	31-33
Oct. 14	Georgia Southern	W	41-14
Oct. 23	at ULM	L	31-41
Oct. 30	Arkansas State	W	31-13
Nov. 6	at Troy	L	24-31
Nov. 13	at Appalachian State	L	7-31
Nov. 20	at Tennessee	L	14-60
Nov. 26	Coastal Carolina (ot)	L	21-27

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SB	NATIONAL
Scoring	24.9 ppg	6	91
Rushing	111.4 ypg	8	115
Passing	256.0 ypg	3	41
Total	367.4 ypg	6	92

DEFENSE	PER GAME	SB	NATIONAL
Scoring	26.4 ppg	5	67
Rushing	146.2 ypg	5	57
Passing	208.4 ypg	4	32
Total	354.7 ypg	5	40

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	SB	NATIONAL
+5	+0.42	3	36

STAT CORNER

3.51

South Alabama's defense ranked sixth in the nation in points allowed per quality possession. The Jaguars held their opponents to just 3.51.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Desmond Trotter, 104-61-596-3, 5 TDs
Rushing: Terrion Avery, 138 att., 508 yds., 1 TD
Receiving: Jalen Wayne, 53 rec., 630 yds., 2 TDs
Tackles: A.J. DeShazor, 64
Sacks: Charles Coleman III, 4.5
Interceptions: Darrell Luter Jr., 4

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Kane Wommack
Record at School: 5-7 (1 year)
Career Record: 5-7 (1 year)
Offensive Coordinator: Major Applewhite
Defensive Coordinator: Corey Batoon
Location: Mobile, AL
Stadium: Hancock Whitney Stadium (25,450)

OFFENSE South Alabama will try to splice key returners with transfers for a cohesive unit in offensive coordinator Major Applewhite's second season. The Jaguars have done this before. A year ago, quarterback Jake Bentley, previously of South Carolina and Utah, finished his career with USA. Now it will try transfer Carter Bradley, who left Toledo after losing his starting position in 2021. Desmond Trotter, the Jags' 2020 starter who lost the job to Bentley, will try to regain the No. 1 role in a competition with Bradley. They'll likely both play.

Top target Jalen Wayne (53 rec., 630 yards) is the latest in a string of NFL-caliber wide receivers for the Jags. But tight ends will be a big part of passing game with Ole Miss transfer DaMarcus "DJ" Thomas joining All-Sun Belt performer Lincoln Sefcik (32 rec., 218 yds., five TDs).

In the backfield, junior college transfer La'Damian Webb will share carries with returning starter Terrion Avery (508 yards rushing). Webb has a high ceiling, but he's never reached it while jumping between numerous schools, including one season at Florida State.

Four starters return on the offensive line, but it's not a surefire strength. Only five teams in FBS allowed more tackles for a loss last season.

DEFENSE The defense is set up for a strong season. The line is deep and experienced with the return of talented Wy'Kevious Thomas (49 tackles, 5.5 for a loss) and senior Gi'Narious Johnson. Plus, nose tackle Zeke Chapman is coming off a standout spring. And defensive end Jamie Sheriff, a 2020 starter, is back from a knee injury that sidelined him last season.

But the secondary may be in even better shape. Cornerback Darrell Luter Jr., an All-Sun Belt first-teamer, led the league with four interceptions. He'll be flanked by Ole Miss transfer Jamar Richardson. Safety Keith Gallmon, another All-Sun Belt performer, is back after posting 59 tackles. Yam Banks (49 tackles) and transfer Jalen Jordan, who started at Ole Miss in 2020, are also in the rotation.

A.J. DeShazor Jr. and Quentin Wilfawn are a proven duo at strongside linebacker. Indiana transfer James Miller will man middle linebacker. The Jags led the Sun Belt in takeaways, but they'd like to be stingier on the scoreboard.

SPECIALISTS Diego Guajardo is a reliable kicker, making 26-of-35 field goals over three seasons. In his career, he's 17-of-20 from under 40 yards, which is particularly valuable since the Jags struggle in the red zone. Three-year starter Jack Brooks is one of the Sun Belt's best punters, averaging 43.2 yards per boot in 2021.

FINAL ANALYSIS Second-year head coach Kane Wommack now has a team in his image. The Jags have the depth and talent to be one of the Sun Belt's best defensive squads. But they need the offense to add some big plays to its ball-control style. Enough early momentum could guide USA to its first bowl game since 2016. But a sluggish start could squander the team's chance to climb the Sun Belt standings.

DARRELL LUTER JR.

Scott Donaldson/South Alabama Athletics

> "They're a lot closer to the top of the league than people think. You look at their film, and they're already a whole different team under this staff."
>
> —An opposing Sun Belt assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	RJ Moss, DL, Biloxi, MS	★★★
2	La'Damian Webb, RB, Opelika, AL*	★★★
3	Malachi Carney, OT, Pleasant Grove, AL	★★★
4	Chrystyile Caldwell, LB, Elba, AL	★★★
5	Marquise Robinson, CB, Summit, MS*	★★★
6	Ricky Fletcher, S, Lexington, MS	★★★
7	Khalil Jacobs, LB, Niceville, FL	★★★
8	Braylon McReynolds, RB, Mobile, AL	★★★
9	Kenton Jerido, OL, Tuscaloosa, AL	★★★
10	Tremel States-Jones, CB, Clearwater, FL	★★★

*junior college transfer

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

WR	**0**	**Jalen Wayne (Sr.)**	83	Christian Wortham (Fr.)
WR	4	Caullin Lacy (So.)	6	Jay'juan Townsend (Fr.)
LT	65	Josh McCulloch (So.)	72	John Gill (Fr.)
LG	**78**	**Trey Simpson (So.)**	55	Dontae Lucas (Jr.)
C	**68**	**James Jackson (Jr.)**	67	Reggie Smith (So.)
RG	**52**	**Anterrious Gray (Jr.)**	74	Reid Gavin (Fr.)
RT	**58**	**Antawn Lewis (Jr.)**	70	Adrein Strickland (Fr.)
TE	**88**	**Lincoln Sefcik (So.)**	20	Brandon Crum (So.)
TE	12	DJ Thomas (Jr.)	27	Jacob Hopper (Fr.)
QB	2	Carter Bradley (Jr.)	1	Desmond Trotter (So.)
RB	3	La'Damian Webb (Jr.)	**25**	**Terrion Avery (Jr.)**

DEFENSE (7)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	**11**	**Jamie Sheriff (Jr.)**	95	Brock Higdon (Fr.)
NT	**48**	**Gi'Narious Johnson (Jr.)**	98	Zeke Chapman (Jr.)
DT	**99**	**Wy'Kevious Thomas (Fr.)**	30	Charles Coleman III (So.)
WOLF	14	CJ Rias (So.)	20	Lamondre Brooks (Fr.)
MLB	4	James Miller (Jr.)	35	Ke'Shun Brown (Fr.)
SLB	**3**	**A.J. DeShazor Jr. (Jr.)**	10	Quentin Wilfawn (Jr.)
CB	16	Jamar Richardson (Sr.)	23	Jason Brooks (Fr.)
CB	**18**	**Darrell Luter Jr. (Jr.)**	7	Marquise Robinson (So.)
HUSKY	**15**	**Yam Banks (Fr.)**	8	Patrick Rosette (Jr.)
ROV	13	CJ Thompson (Jr.)	1	Jalen Jordan (Jr.)
FS	**0**	**Keith Gallmon Jr. (Jr.)**	31	Doug Sullivan (Fr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	36	Diego Guajardo (So.)	**KR**	3	La'Damian Webb (Jr.)
P	92	Jack Brooks (So.)	**PR**	4	Caullin Lacy (So.)

SOUTHERN MISS GOLDEN EAGLES

National Forecast: 103 • Sun Belt West Prediction: 4 • Projected Record: 5-7, 4-4 Sun Belt

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Liberty
Sept. 10	at Miami (Fla.)
Sept. 17	Northwestern State
Sept. 24	at Tulane
Oct. 8	at Troy
Oct. 15	Arkansas State
Oct. 22	at Texas State
Oct. 27	Louisiana
Nov. 5	Georgia State
Nov. 12	at Coastal Carolina
Nov. 19	South Alabama
Nov. 26	at ULM

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 3-9, 2-6 C-USA

Sept. 4	at South Alabama	L	7-31
Sept. 11	Grambling State	W	37-0
Sept. 18	Troy	L	9-21
Sept. 25	at Alabama	L	14-63
Oct. 2	at Rice	L	19-24
Oct. 9	UTEP	L	13-26
Oct. 16	UAB	L	0-34
Oct. 30	at Middle Tennessee	L	10-35
Nov. 6	North Texas	L	14-38
Nov. 13	at UTSA	L	17-27
Nov. 19	at Louisiana Tech	W	35-19
Nov. 27	FIU	W	37-17

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	CUSA	NATIONAL
Scoring	17.7 ppg	14	122
Rushing	120.8 ypg	12	109
Passing	145.5 ypg	14	125
Total	266.2 ypg	14	127
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**CUSA**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	27.9 ppg	9	80
Rushing	156.5 ypg	7	73
Passing	202.0 ypg	1	24
Total	358.5 ypg	3	42
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**CUSA**	**NATIONAL**
-7	-0.58	11	108

STAT CORNER

3.05

Southern Miss scored 3.05 points per quality possession, ranking dead last in the FBS. The Golden Eagles generated quality possessions on only 31.8 percent of possessions (127th).

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Jake Lange, 137-79-843-6, 5 TDs
Rushing: Frank Gore Jr., 179 att., 801 yds., 5 TDs
Receiving: Jason Brownlee, 46 rec., 643 yds., 8 TDs
Tackles: Malik Shorts, 89
Sacks: Josh Carr Jr., 4.5
Interceptions: Four players tied with 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Will Hall
Record at School: 3-9 (1 year)
Career Record: 59-29 (7 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Sam Gregg
Defensive Coordinator: Austin Armstrong
Location: Hattiesburg, MS
Stadium: M.M. Roberts Stadium (36,000)

OFFENSE The quarterback situation in 2021 was a debacle. The opening-day starter, Trey Lowe III, was injured in the second game. The top backup, true freshman Ty Keyes, joined him a few weeks later. That left the position in the hands of a walk-on, Jake Lange, whose four starts yielded twice as many turnovers (10) as touchdowns (five). Eventually, first-year head coach Will Hall abandoned the concept of a "quarterback" altogether, installing a Wildcat package for the last three games that turned out to be more productive than the regular playbook.

Keyes is a touted local product who should get every chance to entrench himself as the long-term starter in Year 2. The rest of the offense is hardly bereft. Running back Frank Gore Jr. and WR Jason Brownlee are established playmakers with all-conference résumés and designs on the next level. The O-line, a basket-case unit for most of last season, finally settled on a functional lineup down the stretch, and this year's group gets reinforcements in the form of transfers from Mississippi State (Calvin McMillian) and Ole Miss (Bryce Ramsey).

DEFENSE Relatively speaking, the defense managed to retain most of its dignity last fall despite watching opponents score 11 non-offensive touchdowns via giveaways and special teams. The back end was solid last year and returns virtually intact: Between the linebackers and secondary, 10 defenders are back who have logged double-digit starts over the past two seasons. The second level in particular, manned by nickel back Camron Harrell, edge rusher Josh Carr Jr. and veteran linebackers Hayes Maples and Santrell Latham, projects as a strength.

The trenches are another story. Most of last year's rotation has moved on, leaving mostly question marks. Two holdovers, seniors Josh Ratcliff and Dominic Quewon, have starting experience; otherwise, the front will lean heavily on new arrivals. Six D-line transfers enrolled in the spring from the SEC and junior college ranks, including former Ole Miss starter Quentin Bivens and massive juco product Demeco Roland, both of whom will be counted on to bring run-clogging heft to the interior.

SPECIALISTS The Eagles allowed two kickoff returns for scores, gave up two more TDs on blocked punts and connected on just eight field goals, their fewest in a season since 1991. The silver lining: Harrell has taken two kickoffs to the house himself the past two years and was first-team All-C-USA as a return man in 2021.

FINAL ANALYSIS The transition to the Sun Belt marks a fresh start. Although Hall's debut was a disappointment, there's still optimism that he can get the program moving in the right direction, and his Mississippi roots could lead him to stick around awhile if he does. His fate is closely linked to Keyes' development. If Keyes settles in, he has the makings of a four-year starter with the potential to keep the Eagles competitive while the program re-establishes its identity. If not, they might feel as adrift in their new league as they did in their old one.

FRANK GORE JR.

AP Photo/Eric Gay

> "They're definitely still rebuilding, but they're doing it with a lot more talent than most teams in that situation. They've been smart working the portal."
>
> —An opposing Sun Belt assistant coach

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1	Latreal Jones, WR, Taylorsville, MS*	★★★
2	Klabron Pollard, OT, Hattiesburg, MS	★★★
3	Demeco Roland, DL, Broken Arrow, OK*	★★★
4	Michael Caraway Jr., CB, Bassfield, MS*	★★★
5	Wil Saxton, OL, Benton, MS	★★★
6	Cameron Knox, WR, New Albany, MS	★★★
7	Kenyon Clay, RB, Union, MS	★★★
8	Kamron Barnes, OL, Natchez, MS	★★★
9	Zach Wilcke, QB, Hernando, MS	★★★
10	Kyron Barnes, OT, Natchez, MS	★★★

*junior college transfer

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (4)

WR	**1**	**Jason Brownlee (Sr.)**	17	Latreal Jones (Jr.)
WR	0	Demarcus Jones (Sr.)	16	Brandon Hayes (So.)
WR	15	Jakarius Caston (Jr.)	85	Brad Dennis (Sr.)
LT	79	Tykeem Doss (Sr.)	78	Calvin McMillian (So.)
LG	**65**	**Gerquan Scott (Jr.)**	50	Wil Saxton (Fr.)
C	51	Briason Mays (Jr.)	55	Bryce Ramsey (So.)
RG	77	John Bolding (Sr.)	60	Coker Wright (Jr.)
RT	**71**	**Paul Gainer Jr. (Sr.)**	72	Matt Ryals (So.)
TE	33	Cole Cavallo (Jr.)	88	Luke Baker (So.)
QB	5	Ty Keyes (Fr.)	8	Trey Lowe III (Jr.)
RB	**3**	**Frank Gore Jr. (So.)**	6	Dajon Richard (So.)

DEFENSE (7)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	7	Dominic Quewon (Sr.)	94	Kristin Booth (So.)
NT	95	Quentin Bivens (Jr.)	51	Demeco Roland (Jr.)
DT	93	Josh Ratcliff (Jr.)	36	Brodarius Lewis (Jr.)
JACK	**45**	**Josh Carr Jr. (Sr.)**	46	Averie Habas (Jr.)
MLB	**32**	**Hayes Maples (Jr.)**	35	TQ Newsome (So.)
WLB	**6**	**Santrell Latham (Sr.)**	28	Swayze Bozeman (Sr.)
CB	0	Natrone Brooks (Sr.)	11	Markel McLaurin (Jr.)
CB	**2**	**Eric Scott Jr. (Sr.)**	12	Michael Caraway Jr. (So.)
STAR	**29**	**Camron Harrell (Sr.)**	3	Tylan Knight (Sr.)
WS	**9**	**Malik Shorts (Jr.)**	5	Jay Jones (So.)
FS	**21**	**Jay Stanley (Jr.)**	1	Lakevias Daniel (Sr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	40	Briggs Bourgeois (Sr.)	**KR**	29	Camron Harrell (Sr.)
P	16	Mason Hunt (Sr.)	**PR**	0	Natrone Brooks (Sr.)

TEXAS STATE BOBCATS

National Forecast: 117 • Sun Belt West Prediction: 5 • Projected Record: 4-8, 2-6 Sun Belt

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	at Nevada
Sept. 9	FIU
Sept. 17	at Baylor
Sept. 24	Houston Baptist
Oct. 1	at James Madison
Oct. 8	Appalachian State
Oct. 15	at Troy
Oct. 22	Southern Miss
Nov. 5	at ULM
Nov. 12	at South Alabama
Nov. 19	Arkansas State
Nov. 26	Louisiana

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 4-8, 3-5 SBC

Sept. 4	Baylor	L	20-29
Sept. 11	at FIU (ot)	W	23-17
Sept. 18	Incarnate Word	L	34-42
Sept. 25	at Eastern Michigan	L	21-59
Oct. 9	South Alabama (ot)	W	33-31
Oct. 16	Troy	L	28-31
Oct. 23	at Georgia State	L	16-28
Oct. 30	at Louisiana	L	0-45
Nov. 6	ULM	W	27-19
Nov. 13	Georgia Southern	L	30-38
Nov. 20	at Coastal Carolina	L	21-35
Nov. 27	at Arkansas State	W	24-22

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SB	NATIONAL
Scoring	23.1 ppg	7	101
Rushing	149.2 ypg	6	78
Passing	193.5 ypg	7	100
Total	342.7 ypg	7	104
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**SB**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	33.0 ppg	8	108
Rushing	183.6 ypg	9	101
Passing	246.8 ypg	7	98
Total	430.4 ypg	7	103
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**SB**	**NATIONAL**
-8	-0.67	10	118

STAT CORNER

0.243

Opponents passed 2.8 percent less against Texas State than an average team, but the Bobcats allowed a 0.243 EPA/pass, 121st in college football.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: None
Rushing: Calvin Hill, 128 att., 714 yds., 3 TDs
Receiving: Marcell Barbee, 40 rec., 520 yds., 5 TDs
Tackles: Sione Tupou, 76
Sacks: Issiah Nixon, 4.0
Interceptions: DeJordan Mask, 1

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Jake Spavital
Record at School: 9-27 (3 years)
Career Record: 9-27 (3 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Jake Spavital
Defensive Coordinator: Zac Spavital
Location: San Marcos, TX
Stadium: Bobcat Stadium (30,000)

OFFENSE The one certainty at quarterback is that there will be a new one under center for the Bobcats in the 2022 season opener. The two starters from last year — Brady McBride and Tyler Vitt — opted to not return, with McBride in the transfer portal and Vitt moving on from football after graduating. Layne Hatcher, a grad transfer with two years left after starting the last three seasons for conference foe Arkansas State, joined the Bobcats in January and was the front-runner throughout spring practice. But that isn't set in stone after a strong spring performance from NC State transfer Ty Evans, who has been a developmental project for head coach Jake Spavital since last spring.

Concerns remain about depth on the offensive line and talent at tight end, but there is a deep receivers group anchored by seniors Marcell Barbee and Javen Banks, and a two-headed monster at running back featuring Calvin Hill and Jahmyl Jeter. Those four players accounted for 65 percent of the touchdowns and 55 percent of the yards from scrimmage for Texas State last season.

DEFENSE Defensive depth is an issue after the departure of key starting and rotational seniors. Twelve of the 20 seniors from last season were on defense.

Some players switched positions due to the losses, with London Harris moving from outside linebacker to inside, and Jordan Revels from defensive end to outside linebacker. Revels led the Bobcats in tackles for a loss (7.5) and finished second in sacks (three), and he has slimmed down to 245 pounds in an effort to increase his speed off the edge.

The Bobcats are expecting reinforcements; Spavital anticipates double-digit additions through recruiting, specifically on defense, during the summer. It will be necessary after Texas State finished eighth in the Sun Belt last season in allowing 33 points per game.

SPECIALISTS Special teams are the steadiest of the three main groups with kicker Seth Keller and punter Seamus O'Kelly entering their junior years. Keller was named All-Sun Belt honorable mention last season after hitting 15-of-18 field-goal attempts and all 32 extra points. O'Kelly, a 2020 All-Sun Belt honorable mention selection, averaged 38.4 yards on 60 punts last season.

Receiver and kick returner Donnovan Moorer is recovering from a torn ACL, so safety DeJordan Mask has assumed kickoff return duties. Punt returns should be handled by receivers Rontavius Groves and Ashtyn Hawkins.

FINAL ANALYSIS After a 9–27 record over Spavital's first three seasons, this fourth season could be a crucial turning point for the program. The team did improve from two wins in 2020 to four in 2021, but the Bobcats haven't had a winning season since 2014, going 19–65 over the last seven seasons. With handpicked players in place after riding the portal wave the last two recruiting classes, the fate of his team and his career rest on Spavital's shoulders.

JORDAN REVELS

John Rivera/Icon Sportswire via Getty Images

> "They're not as bad as their record, but their record is pretty bad. One thing you notice coaching against them is that those kids play really hard for Spav [Jake Spavital]. They don't quit; they just don't have enough talent. [QB] Layne Hatcher in the offense will be interesting."
>
> —An opposing Sun Belt assistant coach

TOP 5 RECRUITS

1	AJ Edwards, CB, Madison, MS*	★★★
2	Josh Berry, RB, Davenport, FL*	★★★
3	CJ Williams, LB, Perkinston, MS*	★★
4	Bernock Iya, CB, Azle, TX	★★
5	David Hensley, OL, North Richland Hills, TX	★★

*junior college transfer

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)

WR	**18**	**Marcell Barbee (Sr.)**	5	Demarcus Gregory (Jr.)
WR	**12**	**Javen Banks (Sr.)**	9	Drue Jackson (Jr.)
WR	7	Rontavius Groves (Sr.)	**80**	**Chandler Speights (Sr.)**
LT	**73**	**Dalton Cooper (So.)**	79	Jaydan Smith (Jr.)
LG	61	Evan Lovell (Jr.)	75	Silas Robinson (Jr.)
C	**66**	**Russell Baker (Sr.)**	64	Tristan Simpson (Fr.)
RG	**60**	**Kyle Hergel (Jr.)**	75	Silas Robinson (Jr.)
RT	74	Richard West (Sr.)	76	Kylar Cooks (Jr.)
TE	**87**	**Jackson Lanam (Jr.)**	41	Tyler Huff (Sr.)
QB	3	Layne Hatcher (Jr.)	4	Ty Evans (So.)
RB	**11**	**Calvin Hill (So.)**	28	Jahmyl Jeter (Jr.)

DEFENSE (6)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	95	Nico Ezidore (Sr.)	99	Anthony Shipton (Jr.)
NT	92	Samuel Obiang (Sr.)		Kajuan Robinson (So.)
DE	93	DeOnte Washington (So.)	97	Dominique Ratcliff (Fr.)
SLB	**27**	**London Harris (Sr.)**	17	Kenny Haynes (So.)
MLB	**55**	**Sione Tupou (Sr.)**	30	Josh Emmanuel (Fr.)
OLB	**8**	**Jordan Revels (Jr.)**	10	Issiah Nixon (So.)
CB	**0**	**Jarron Morris (Jr.)**	21	Pierre Kemeni (So.)
CB	**3**	**Kordell Rodgers (Sr.)**	22	Chris Mills (Jr.)
NB	**13**	**DeJordan Mask (Jr.)**	24	AJ Edwards (So.)
SS	12	Tory Spears (Jr.)	2	Kevin Anderson (Jr.)
FS	26	Jared Hopper (So.)	25	Ronnie Hamrick II (Fr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	43	Seth Keller (Jr.)	**KR**	13	DeJordan Mask (Jr.)
P	99	Seamus O'Kelly (Jr.)	**PR**	7	Rontavius Groves (Sr.)

TROY TROJANS

National Forecast: 96 • Sun Belt West Prediction: 3 • Projected Record: 6-6, 4-4 Sun Belt

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	at Ole Miss
Sept. 10	Alabama A&M
Sept. 17	at Appalachian State
Sept. 24	Marshall
Oct. 1	at WKU
Oct. 8	Southern Miss
Oct. 15	Texas State
Oct. 20	at South Alabama
Nov. 5	at Louisiana
Nov. 12	Army
Nov. 19	ULM
Nov. 26	at Arkansas State

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 5-7, 3-5 SBC

Sept. 4	Southern	W	55-3
Sept. 11	Liberty	L	13-21
Sept. 18	at Southern Miss	W	21-9
Sept. 25	at ULM	L	16-29
Oct. 2	at South Carolina	L	14-23
Oct. 9	Georgia Southern	W	27-24
Oct. 16	at Texas State	W	31-28
Oct. 28	at Coastal Carolina	L	28-35
Nov. 6	South Alabama	W	31-24
Nov. 13	Louisiana	L	21-35
Nov. 20	Appalachian State	L	7-45
Nov. 27	at Georgia State	L	10-37

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SB	NATIONAL
Scoring	22.8 ppg	8	102
Rushing	99.8 ypg	9	123
Passing	238.7 ypg	5	62
Total	338.4 ypg	9	109

DEFENSE	PER GAME	SB	NATIONAL
Scoring	26.1 ppg	4	64
Rushing	143.0 ypg	3	49
Passing	194.9 ypg	3	21
Total	337.9 ypg	2	24

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	SB	NATIONAL
+3	+0.25	4	44

STAT CORNER

33.5%

Troy averaged a 33.5% rushing success rate in 2021, 117th in the FBS. The Trojans averaged 4.8 yards per rush, 88th in college football.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Gunnar Watson, 228-140-1,613-4, 8 TDs
Rushing: Kimani Vidal, 152 att., 701 yds., 5 TDs
Receiving: Tez Johnson, 67 rec., 735 yds., 4 TDs
Tackles: Carlton Martial, 127
Sacks: Javon Solomon, 11.0
Interceptions: Four players tied with 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Jon Sumrall
Record at School: First Season
Career Record: First Season
Offensive Coordinator: Joe Craddock
Defensive Coordinator: Shiel Wood
Location: Troy, AL
Stadium: Veterans Memorial Stadium (30,470)

OFFENSE Troy's production declined sharply each of the past two seasons under now-former coach Chip Lindsey, a trajectory that ultimately cost Lindsey his job. The 2021 Trojans averaged just 19.9 points vs. FBS opponents, a plunge of more than a touchdown per game from 2020. So while there are plenty of familiar names back in the fold, it's probably wise to take their status under new head coach Jon Sumrall with a grain of salt.

Senior quarterback Gunnar Watson has 16 career starts to his credit, including the final seven games last year after reclaiming the job at midseason, but he faced a spring push from redshirt freshman Quayde Hawkins. Three of last year's top four receivers return, including steady sophomore Tez Johnson in the slot, but the new staff made a point of adding a couple of bigger targets, UAB transfer RaJae' Johnson and Samford TE Michael Vice. The backfield rotation behind junior Kimani Vidal is wide open.

One sure thing: left tackle Austin Stidham, a sixth-year senior who's logged more than 3,000 college snaps and earned All-Sun Belt honors in back-to-back seasons. The rest of the front isn't as decorated, but it does have options.

DEFENSE Troy ranked in the top 25 nationally in 2021 in total defense and yards per play allowed, a reflection of a veteran lineup coming into its own after taking its lumps as underclassmen. With most of the key contributors back, the arrow is still pointing up.

Five returnees earned all-conferences notices, representing all three levels of the defense: defensive tackle Will Choloh, edge rushers Javon Solomon and Richard Jibunor, linebacker Carlton Martial and nickel back TJ Harris. Martial, a former walk-on turned All-SBC mainstay, has racked up 443 career tackles in four years, easily the most of any active FBS player and well within range of the Division I record of 545. Solomon and Jibunor, who shared the Bandit role, combined for 27 tackles for a loss and 72 QB pressures, according to Pro Football Focus.

The most pressing vacancy is on the back end, at the safety slot opposite entrenched senior Dell Pettus. Given the depth at cornerback, don't rule out one making the move to fill it.

SPECIALISTS Georgia transfer Brooks Buce returns as the primary kicker after going 8-of-9 on field goals. Other areas of the kicking game were less reliable: Punter Luke Magliozzi had two attempts blocked, and neither return unit generated a return of 30-plus yards.

FINAL ANALYSIS The Lindsey era managed just 15 wins in three years. For a program that went 31–8 in its last three seasons under his predecessor, Neal Brown, that won't cut it. With Sumrall, who was on staff from 2015-17, the Trojans are plainly looking to restore the stability of the Brown years before they're forgotten. The defense should serve as a solid foundation for Sumrall, a defensive coach, to get the project moving in the right direction.

JAVON SOLOMON

Brandon Sumrall/Cal Sport Media via AP Images

> "This new staff is going to do big things in recruiting, but it will take time. Jon Sumrall could be a huge name in a few years, like how Billy Napier rose through the conference."
>
> —An opposing Sun Belt assistant coach

TOP 8 RECRUITS

1	Tae Meadows, RB, Roanoke, AL	★★★
2	Tucker Kilcrease, QB, Brantley, AL	★★★
3	Blake Matthews, ATH, Bremen, GA	★★★
4	Matthew Johnson, OT, Marbury, AL	★★★
5	Kyler Gibson, OT, Munford, AL	★★★
6	Luke Hodge, LB, Oneonta, AL	★★
7	Nasir Pogue, CB, Auburn, AL	n/r
8	Daniel King, OL, Cairo, GA*	n/r

*junior college transfer

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (9)

WR	**0**	**RaJae' Johnson (Sr.)**	8	Demontrez Brown (Sr.)
WR	11	Deshon Stoudemire (Jr.)	81	Kyran Griffin-Isom (Jr.)
WR	15	Tez Johnson (So.)	**5**	**Jabre Barber (So.)**
LT	**79**	**Austin Stidham (Sr.)**	63	Carson Burt (So.)
LG	**64**	**Deandre Butler (Sr.)**	75	Kannon Biggs (So.)
C	58	Logan Self (So.)	78	Jeremiah Frazier (So.)
RG	**55**	**Jake Andrews (Sr.)**	51	Chase Little (So.)
RT	**67**	**Grant Betts (Sr.)**	77	Derrick Graham (rFr.)
TE	88	Michael Vice (Sr.)	**85**	**Deyunkrea Lewis (Jr.)**
QB	**18**	**Gunnar Watson (Sr.)**	12	Quayde Hawkins (Fr.)
RB	**28**	**Kimani Vidal (Jr.)**	1	Jamontez Woods (Jr.)

DEFENSE (8)

Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	3	Antonio Showers (Sr.)	47	DeVon Reaves (Jr.)
NT	95	Luis Medina (Jr.)	21	Shakel Brown (Sr.)
DT	**5**	**Will Choloh (Sr.)**	97	AJ Pierce (Sr.)
BAN	**41**	**Javon Solomon (Jr.)**	9	Richard Jibunor (Sr.)
MLB	**2**	**Carlton Martial (Sr.)**	**10**	**Jayden McDonald (Sr.)**
WLB	7	KJ Robertson (Sr.)	10	Jayden McDonald (Sr.)
SPEAR	**8**	**TJ Harris (Sr.)**	19	Darrell Starling (Jr.)
CB	**18**	**Reddy Steward (Sr.)**	6	Taiyon Palmer (Sr.)
CB	**1**	**Elijah Culp (Jr.)**	13	Zion Williams (Sr.)
SS	**31**	**Dell Pettus (Sr.)**	23	Keyshawn Swanson (Jr.)
FS	4	Craig Slocum (Sr.)	12	Markeis Colvin (Sr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	13	Brooks Buce (Sr.)	**KR**	12	Markeis Colvin (Sr.)
P	44	Luke Magliozzi (Sr.)	**PR**	15	Tez Johnson (Jr.)

ULM WARHAWKS

National Forecast: 126 • Sun Belt West Prediction: 7 • Projected Record: 3-9, 2-6 Sun Belt

2022 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	at Texas
Sept. 10	Nicholls
Sept. 17	at Alabama
Sept. 24	Louisiana
Oct. 1	at Arkansas State
Oct. 8	Coastal Carolina
Oct. 15	at South Alabama
Oct. 22	at Army
Nov. 5	Texas State
Nov. 12	at Georgia State
Nov. 19	at Troy
Nov. 26	Southern Miss

2021 RESULTS

RECORD: 4-8, 2-6 SBC

Sept. 4	at Kentucky	L	10-45
Sept. 18	Jackson State	W	12-7
Sept. 25	Troy	W	29-16
Oct. 2	at Coastal Carolina	L	6-59
Oct. 9	Georgia State	L	21-55
Oct. 16	Liberty	W	31-28
Oct. 23	South Alabama	W	41-31
Oct. 30	at Appalachian State	L	28-59
Nov. 6	at Texas State	L	19-27
Nov. 13	Arkansas State	L	24-27
Nov. 20	at LSU	L	14-27
Nov. 27	at Louisiana	L	16-21

2021 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SB	NATIONAL
Scoring	20.9 ppg	9	110
Rushing	129.9 ypg	7	95
Passing	191.8 ypg	8	102
Total	321.7 ypg	10	115

DEFENSE	PER GAME	SB	NATIONAL
Scoring	33.5 ppg	9	110
Rushing	153.5 ypg	8	68
Passing	289.3 ypg	9	125
Total	442.8 ypg	9	112

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	SB	NATIONAL
+2	+0.17	5	50

STAT CORNER

8.12

ULM faced the ninth-longest average third-down distance in the FBS, 8.12 yards to go. The Warhawks were successful on just 36.9 percent of attempts, 111th among FBS teams.

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Chandler Rogers, 181-115-1,301-3, 9 TDs
Rushing: Andrew Henry, 128 att., 487 yds., 4 TDs
Receiving: Boogie Knight, 44 rec., 587 yds., 3 TDs
Tackles: Zack Woodard, 90
Sacks: Zack Woodard, 3.5
Interceptions: 5 players tied with 1

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Terry Bowden
Record at School: 4-8 (1 year)
Career Record: 179-122-2 (25+ years)
Offensive Coordinator: Matt Kubik
Defensive Coordinator: Vic Koenning
Location: Monroe, LA
Stadium: Malone Stadium (30,427)

OFFENSE ULM returns its part-time starter at quarterback, its top two rushers and almost too many wide receivers to count. But retention doesn't necessarily equal production, especially since the Warhawks ranked last in the Sun Belt in total offense last season. Nevertheless, there are several options in place for new offensive coordinator Matt Kubik. He was the play-caller for ULM's explosive offense from 2016-19 before spending the last two seasons as the Southern Miss offensive coordinator and as a state champion high school coach in Mississippi.

Kubik is adept at developing quarterbacks, especially those with dual-threat abilities. His best options are Chandler Rogers and Jiya Wright. Last season, Rogers passed for 1,301 yards, nine TDs and three interceptions in seven starts, and he was sometimes the team's best rushing option with 357 yards. Wright was productive as a passer and runner in short stints. Both will probably play.

Boogie Knight (44 rec., 587 yards) is the best in a deep and balanced receiving corps that will feature some four-wide sets. Kansas State transfer Tyrone Howell is a good candidate to fit in Kubik's vertical passing game.

Malik Jackson and Andrew Henry will share the load at running back after combining for 903 yards rushing. The offensive line has holes, and the ground game needs an upgrade after averaging barely 3.0 yards per carry.

DEFENSE Vic Koenning has served as defensive coordinator at Wyoming, Troy, Clemson, Kansas State, Illinois and West Virginia, so nothing will shock him about the challenges of his new job.

Nose guard Caleb Thomas (6.5 tackles for a loss), linebacker Zack Woodard (90 tackles, team-high 8.5 tackles for a loss) and cornerback Josh Newton are all-conference-caliber players. But disruptive edge rushers, depth in the front seven and consistent pass coverage are needed.

Experience may help ULM improve on its 125th-ranked pass defense. Newton, safety Nick Roberts and Jabari Johnson, who will play the Star position, are multi-year starters.

SPECIALISTS Oklahoma transfer Calum Sutherland had a strong debut season for ULM, making 16-of-21 field goals and earning All-Sun Belt honors. Punter Devyn McCormick also returns, but ULM would like to use him less. Knight is back to return kicks and punts, but both units struggled last season.

FINAL ANALYSIS Terry Bowden inherited arguably the worst team in the FBS and led it to a 4–8 mark in his debut season. Now comes the harder part: making ULM consistently competitive. A non-conference schedule that features Texas, Alabama and Army won't offer any favors. The Warhawks must adjust to three new coordinators, although this staff may be a better fit for Sun Belt success than the previous one. ULM was the least penalized team in the nation in 2021, indicating that players bought into Bowden's message. Now he's got to sell it again while the team goes through scheme changes. The job won't get any easier.

BOOGIE KNIGHT

AP Photo/Gerald Herbert

> "They're always an up-and-down program because they can't hold on to talent, and they leaned heavily on the portal last year. With new coordinators, I expect they'll look very different and might struggle early."
>
> —An opposing Sun Belt assistant coach

TOP 7 RECRUITS

1	Tellek Lockette, OL, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	★★★
2	Tristan Driggers, S, Hallsville, TX*	★★★
3	Bralen Taylor, Edge, Cuero, TX*	★★★
4	Tylan Glass, S, Ellisville, MS*	★★
5	Zarian McGill, OL, Ellisville, MS*	★★
6	Kyre' Williams, S, Akron, OH*	n/r
7	Car'lin Vigers, S, Independence, KS*	n/r

*junior college transfer

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

WR	17	**Boogie Knight (Sr.)**	7	Zach Jackson (Sr.)
WR	80	Will Derrick (Jr.)	4	Tyrone Howell (Sr.)
WR	5	**Jevin Frett (Sr.)**	0	Fred Lloyd Jr. (Sr.)
LT	59	**Victor Cutler (So.)**	62	Peyton Talley (Fr.)
LG	66	**Peyton Dunn (So.)**	71	Brennen Taunton (So.)
C	55	Zarian McGill (So.)	60	Nick Lowe (Jr.)
RG	57	Elijah Fisher (So.)	63	Semaj Payton (Fr.)
RT	77	**Keydrell Lewis (So.)**	72	Stacey Wilkins (So.)
TE	82	Zach Rasmussen (Sr.)	35	Rylan Green (Fr.)
QB	6	**Chandler Rogers (So.)**	18	Jiya Wright (Jr.)
RB	2	Malik Jackson (Jr.)	1	**Andrew Henry (Jr.)**

DEFENSE (6)

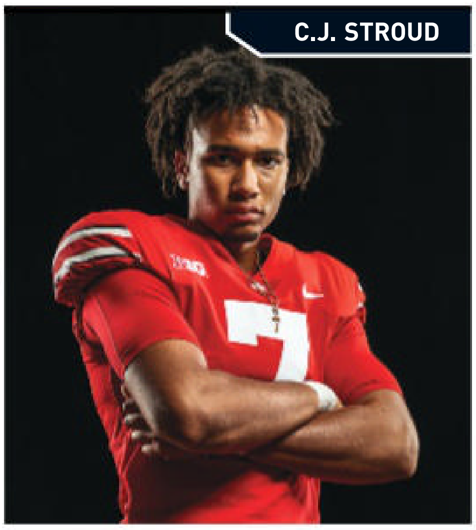
Returning Starters in **BOLD**

DE	93	Anthony Campbell (Jr.)	94	Seth Mason (So.)
NG	91	**Caleb Thomas (Sr.)**	99	Tyrese Black (Jr.)
DT	5	**Quincy Ledet Jr. (So.)**	90	Sir'Darrius Ellis (Jr.)
EDGE	10	Quae Drake (Jr.)	47	Fitzroy Gardner (Jr.)
MLB	9	**Zack Woodard (Sr.)**	52	Tralon Thomas (Sr.)
WLB	2	Tristan Driggers (So.)	22	Tylan Glass (So.)
STAR	21	**Jabari Johnson (Jr.)**	20	Jordyn Riley (Sr.)
CB	19	Lu Tillery (So.)	13	David Godsey Jr. (Fr.)
CB	0	**Josh Newton (Jr.)**	18	Caymen Mills (Fr.)
CAT	30	Keydrain Calligan (So.)	28	Kevin Jones (Jr.)
S	1	**Nick Roberts (Sr.)**	6	Tavier Williams (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	31	Calum Sutherland (Sr.)	KR	17	Boogie Knight (Sr.)
P	34	Devyn McCormick (Sr.)	PR	17	Boogie Knight (Sr.)

EXTRA POINTS


C.J. STROUD

Eric Wagner/Ohio State Athletics

TOP 10 HEISMAN CANDIDATES

1. C.J. Stroud, QB, Ohio State
2. Bryce Young, QB, Alabama
3. Caleb Williams, QB, USC
4. Will Anderson Jr., LB, Alabama
5. Bijan Robinson, RB, Texas
6. Braelon Allen, RB, Wisconsin
7. Jaxson Smith-Njigba, WR, Ohio State
8. Hendon Hooker, QB, Tennessee
9. Dillon Gabriel, QB, Oklahoma
10. Grayson McCall, QB, Coastal Carolina

TOP 10 GAMES OF 2022

1. Michigan at Ohio State, Nov. 26
2. Texas A&M at Alabama, Oct. 8
3. Notre Dame at Ohio State, Sept. 3
4. Oregon vs. Georgia (Atlanta), Sept. 3
5. Clemson at Notre Dame, Nov. 5
6. USC at Utah, Oct. 15
7. Oklahoma vs. Texas (Dallas), Oct. 8
8. NC State at Clemson, Oct. 1
9. Florida vs. Georgia (Jacksonville, FL), Oct. 29
10. Notre Dame at USC, Nov. 26

TOP 15 IMPACT TRANSFER QBS FOR 2022

1. Caleb Williams, USC (from Oklahoma)
2. Spencer Rattler, South Carolina (from Oklahoma)
3. Dillon Gabriel, Oklahoma (from UCF)
4. JT Daniels, West Virginia (from Georgia)
5. Cameron Ward, Washington State (from FCS Incarnate Word)
6. Adrian Martinez, Kansas State (from Nebraska)
7. Bo Nix, Oregon (from Auburn)
8. Quinn Ewers, Texas (from Ohio State)
9. Casey Thompson, Nebraska (from Texas)
10. Jaxson Dart, Ole Miss (from USC)
11. Kedon Slovis, Pittsburgh (from USC)
12. Max Johnson, Texas A&M (from LSU)
13. Michael Penix Jr., Washington (from Indiana)
14. Zach Calzada, Auburn (from Texas A&M)
15. Jayden Daniels, LSU (from Arizona State)

GRADING COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S FIRST-YEAR HEAD COACHES FOR 2021

		FINAL GRADE
1	Blake Anderson, Utah State	A+
2	Shane Beamer, South Carolina	A
3	Josh Heupel, Tennessee	A
4	Bret Bielema, Illinois	B+
5	Gus Malzahn, UCF	B+
6	Lance Leipold, Kansas	B
7	Charles Huff, Marshall	B-
8	Kane Wommack, South Alabama	B-
9	Terry Bowden, ULM	B-
10	Andy Avalos, Boise State	B-
11	Bryan Harsin, Auburn	C
12	Will Hall, Southern Miss	C
13	Steve Sarkisian, Texas	C-
14	Maurice Linguist, Buffalo	C-
15	Jedd Fisch, Arizona	C-
16	Clark Lea, Vanderbilt	C-
17	Tim Albin, Ohio	C-
18	Butch Jones, Arkansas State	D

GRADING COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S HEAD COACH HIRES FOR 2022

	FINAL GRADE
Lincoln Riley, USC	A+
Brian Kelly, LSU	A+
Mario Cristobal, Miami (Fla.)	A
Billy Napier, Florida	A
Marcus Freeman, Notre Dame	A-
Jerry Kill, New Mexico State	A-
Joe Moorhead, Akron	A-
Brent Venables, Oklahoma	A-
Jay Norvell, Colorado State	A-
Kalen DeBoer, Washington	A-
Jeff Tedford, Fresno State	B+
Sonny Dykes, TCU	B+
Mike MacIntyre, FIU	B+
Tony Elliott, Virginia	B+
Jon Sumrall, Troy	B+
Mike Elko, Duke	B+
Dan Lanning, Oregon	B
Rhett Lashlee, SMU	B
Brent Pry, Virginia Tech	B-
Joey McGuire, Texas Tech	B-
Jake Dickert, Washington State	B-
Sonny Cumbie, Louisiana Tech	B-
Don Brown, UMass	B-
Timmy Chang, Hawaii	B-
Jim Mora, Connecticut	C+
Clay Helton, Georgia Southern	C
Stan Drayton, Temple	C
Ken Wilson, Nevada	C
Michael Desormeaux, Louisiana	C